DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 458 967 PS 029 927

TITLE	Grace and Courtesy: A Human Responsibility. AMI/USA Conference (Oak Brook, Illinois, July 23-26, 1998).
INSTITUTION	American Montessori International of the United States, Inc., Rochester, NY.
PUB DATE	1999-05-00
NOTE	137p.; "A Montessori Community for Adolescents" copyrighted by Camillo Grazzini and Baiba Krumins G.
AVAILABLE FROM	Association Montessori International of the United States, Inc., 410 Alexander St., Rochester, NY 14607 ($15). Tel: 716-461-5920; Fax: 716-461-0075; e-mail: usaami3@aol.com ($15).
PUB TYPE	Collected Works - Proceedings (021)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC06 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Adolescents; Child Development; *Children; Conference Papers; Conferences; Curriculum; *Educational Practices; Elementary Secondary Education; *Montessori Method; Moral Development; Preschool Education; *Responsibility
IDENTIFIERS	*Courtesy; Erdkinder; Montessori Preschools; Montessori Schools

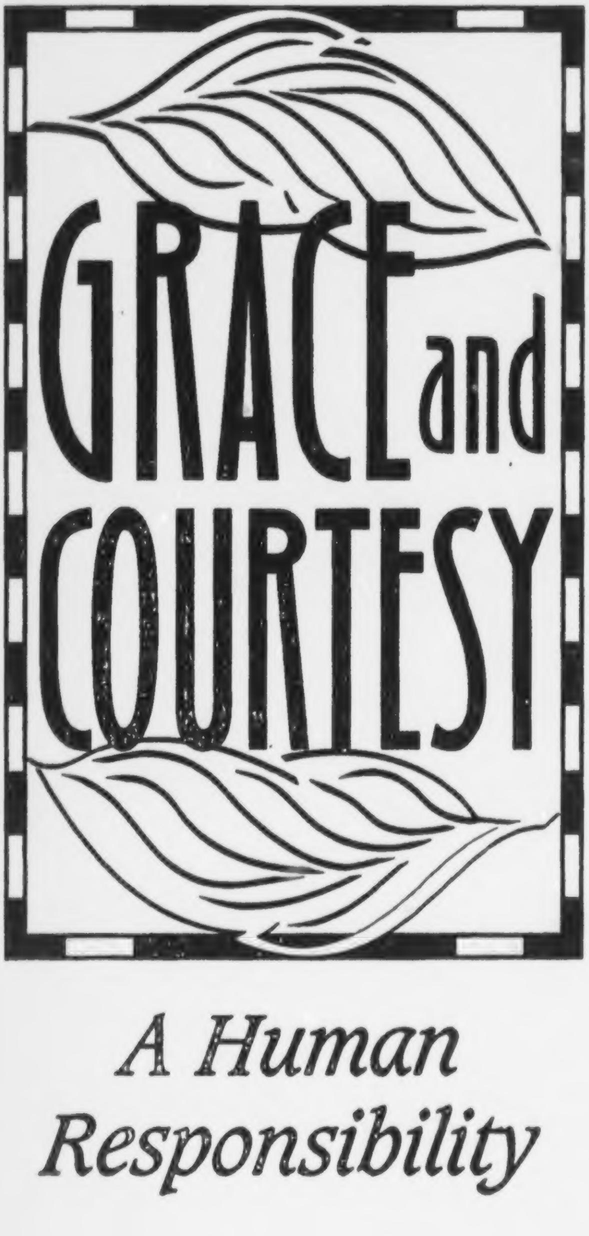
ABSTRACT

This conference proceedings compile presentations from a 1998 meeting of the American Montessori International of the United States, focusing on the importance of grace and courtesy in children's lives and in Montessori education. The papers presented are: (1) "Grace--The Felicity of Being" (Renilde Montessori); (2) "A Montessori Community for Adolescents" (Camillo Grazzini and Baiba Krumins G.); (3) "My Tribute to Mario Montessori" (Camillo Grazzini); (4) "The Natural Unfolding of Grace and Courtesy in Children under Three Years" (Judi Orion); (5) "Grace and Courtesy for the Primary Child: Theoretical Foundations" (Janet McDonell); (6) "Grace and Courtesy during the Years of Lost Manners" (Allyn Travis); (7) "Growing Responsive Schools: An Evolving Theory of Montessori Administration" (Sharon L. Dubble); (8) "Respect as the Foundation for Grace and Courtesy in the Elementary Classroom" (Laura Smyczek); (9) "A Montessori Erdkinder Program, Practical Considerations" (Peter Gebhardt-Seele); (10) "The Gift of Grace and Courtesy: Revealing the Normalized Community" (Mary Lou Cobb); (11) "Maria Montessori and the Cosmic Creation Story" (Brian Swimme); (12) "The Company of the Elect" (Renilde Montessori); (13) "Peer Mediation--A Useful Tool for Grace and Courtesy in the Elementary Classroom" (Carol Hicks); (14) "Chivalry and the Development of Service" (Margaret E. Stephenson); (15) "The Integration of Cultures: The Montessori Contribution" (Winfried Bohm); (16) "All Day Montessori: The Role of Grace and Courtesy" (Laura Morris); (17) "Grace and Courtesy: A Foundation for Moral Development" (Kay Baker); (18) "The Grace of Music" (Nicole Marchak); (19) "Taking Your School On-Line" (Bruce Marbin); (20) "The Role of the Assistant in a Montessori Classroom" (Sandra Girlato); (21) "Emerging Adolescence: Finding One's Place in the Cosmos" (Patricia Schaefer); (22) "Graceful Passages: Exploring Culture through Literature" (Joen Bettmann); (23) "Community: Valuing People in the Montessori School" (Tom Lepoutre-Postlewaite); and (24) "Education, Ethics and the Family" (Mona Grieser). Some papers contain references. (KB)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ps

ED 458 967



GRACE and COURTESY

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☒ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

- Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Virginia McHugh

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

1

A Human Responsibility

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

PS 029927

AMI

Hyatt Regency Oak Brook
Oak Brook, Illinois
July 23-26, 1998

AMI
USA

Grace and Courtesy

A Human Responsibility

© 1999, Association Montessori International of the United States, Inc.
All rights reserved.

This book and any portion thereof may not be reproduced for any purpose, whether private or public, without the expressed written permission of the Association Montessori Internationale and the Association Montessori International of the United States Inc.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Conference Schedule 4

Grace – The Felicity of Being Renilde Montessori 6

A Montessori Community for Adolescents Camillo Grazzini, Baiba Krumins G. 9

My Tribute to Mario Montessori Camillo Grazzini 19

The Natural Unfolding of Grace and Courtesy in Children Under Three Years Judi Orion 24

Grace and Courtesy for the Primary Child: Theoretical Foundations Janet McDonell 27

Grace and Courtesy During the Years of Lost Manners Allyn Travis 31

Growing Responsive Schools: An Evolving Theory of Montessori Administration Sharon L. Dubble, Ph.D. 37

Respect as the Foundation for Grace and Courtesy in the Elementary Classroom Laura Smyczek 41

A Montessori Erdkinder Program, Practical Considerations Peter Gebhardt-Seele, Ph.D. 49

The Gift of Grace and Courtesy: Revealing the Normalized Community Mary Lou Cobb 54

Maria Montessori and the Cosmic Creation Story Brian Swimme, Ph.D. 58

The Company of the Elect Renilde Montessori 62

Peer Mediation – A Useful Tool for Grace and Courtesy in the Elementary Classroom Carol Hicks 64

Chivalry and the Development of Service Margaret E. Stephenson 73

The Integration of Cultures: The Montessori Contribution Prof. Dr. Winfried Böhm 81

All Day Montessori: The Role of Grace and Courtesy Laura Morris 86

Grace and Courtesy: A Foundation for Moral Development Kay Baker, Ph.D. 88

The Grace of Music Nicole Marchak 94

Taking Your School On-Line Bruce Marbin 102

The Role of the Assistant in a Montessori Classroom Sandra Girlato 107

Emerging Adolescence: Finding One's Place in the Cosmos Patricia Schaefer 112

Graceful Passages: Exploring Culture Through Literature Joen Bettmann 118

Community: Valuing People in the Montessori School Tom Lepoutre-Postlewaite 124

Education, Ethics and the Family Mona Grieser 130

CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

Thursday
July 23, 1998

7:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m. *Grace – The Felicity of Being*
Renilde Montessori

8:00 p.m. - 8:30 p.m. Slide Show Tribute to Mario Montessori

8:30 p.m. Reception

Friday
July 24, 1998

10:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m. *A Montessori Community for Adolescents*
Camillo Grazzini & Baiba Krumins

11:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon *My Tribute to Mario Montessori*
Camillo Grazzini

2:00 p.m. - 3:15 p.m. Seminar Sessions
- *The Natural Unfolding of Grace and Courtesy in Children Under Three Years,* Judi Orion
- *Grace and Courtesy for the Primary Child: Theoretical Foundations,* Janet McDonell
- *Grace and Courtesy During the Years of Lost Manners,* Allyn Travis
- *Growing Responsive Schools: An Evolving Theory of Montessori Administration,* Sharon L. Dubble, Ph.D.

3:45 p.m. - 5:00 p.m. Seminar Sessions
- *The Role of the Grace and Courtesy Lessons in the Development of Compassion, Generosity and Kindness,** Wendy Calise
- *Respect as the Foundation of Grace and Courtesy in the Elementary Classroom,* Laura Smyczek
- *A Montessori Erdkinder Program, Practical Considerations,* Peter Gebhardt-Seele, Ph.D.
- *The Gift of Grace and Courtesy: Revealing the Normalized Community,* Mary Lou Cobb

Saturday
July 25, 1998

9:00 a.m. - 10:30 a.m. *Maria Montessori and the Cosmic Creation Story*
Brian Swimme, Ph.D.

11:00 a.m. - 12:15 p.m. Seminar Sessions
- *The Universe Story,** Brian Swimme, Ph.D.
- *What Does Grace and Courtesy Mean When Working With Children Under Three?,** Judi Orion
- *The Company of the Elect,* Renilde Montessori
- *Peer Mediation – A Useful Tool for Grace and Courtesy in the Elementary Classroom,* Carol Hicks

Sunday

July 26, 1998

9:00 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.	*Chivalry and the Development of Service* Margaret E. Stephenson
11:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon	*The Integration of Cultures: The Montessori Contribution* Prof. Dr. Winfried Böhm
2:00 p.m. - 3:15 p.m.	Seminar Sessions ❖ *All Day Montessori: The Role of Grace and Courtesy,* Laura Morris ❖ *Grace and Courtesy: A Foundation for Moral Development,* Kay Baker, Ph.D. ❖ *The Grace of Music,* Nicole Marchak ❖ *Taking Your School On-Line,* Bruce Marbin
3:45 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.	Seminar Sessions ❖ *The Role of the Assistant in a Montessori Classroom,* Sandra Girlato ❖ *Emerging Adolescence: Finding One's Place in the Cosmos,* Patricia Schaeter ❖ *Graceful Passages: Exploring Culture Through Literature,* Joen Bettmann ❖ *Community: Valuing People in the Montessori School,* Tom Lepoutre-Postlewaite
7:30 p.m.	Banquet Address *Education, Ethics and the Family* Mona Grieser

* *Not available for this printing.*

Grace – The Felicity of Being

Renilde Montessori

It has been said that the child comes into the world in a state of grace. Grace – a word rich in spiritual meaning, a word many of whose acceptances are applicable to the child. The child charms, the child provides unmerited divine assistance to man for his regeneration and sanctification, the child is disposed to kindness and clemency. Above all, the child loves and inspires love.

Love is a term much maligned, besmirched and muddied. This is to be deplored.

In *The Secret of Childhood* (Chapter IV- *Where Adults Impede* - "The Intelligence of Love") Maria Montessori says, "The whole labour of life, which fulfils itself through its laws and brings things into harmony, reaches consciousness under the form of love. It is not the motor impulse, but it is a reflection of the motor impulse, as planets reflect the light of the sun. The motor is instinct, the creative urge of life. But this, in bringing creation to being, tends to make love felt, and therefore love fills the consciousness of the child. His self-realisation comes about in him through love."

It is said, "The child is born of love." Perhaps, perhaps not; and, if so, with bizarre misconceptions of what is meant by love. Doctors' waiting rooms abound in pamphlets bearing jarring titles such as "safe love."

One day, when life's essential values emerge from the absurd chaos in which evolving humanity finds itself, we may laugh, ruefully and with compassion, at the inane and shallow mores of the second millennium, characterised by a gamut of mean, lewd, petty interpretations of the primordial energy we call love.

Love, cloaked in grace, is the child's endowment. Those who call the child into the world, and those who make themselves responsible for ensuring the excellence of its existence in this world, must seek within to find again that old, forgotten grace with which to meet the pristine, unsullied, infinitely generous grace of the child.

How long will it take humanity to see the newborn child in all its dignity, how long until we learn to appreciate in this miraculous being the powerful force of life, until we allow ourselves, delightedly, to be swept along with the great vitality generated by this companionable, funny, tender, demanding little person? Instead, we dig in our heels and put all our energies into retaining, restraining, stultifying the vigorous life we ourselves have engendered. We smother it with the obfuscated ignorance of instinct run dry, replaced by a cacophony of information, so much and so deafening that we can no longer distinguish good from bad from nonsense from outrageous.

Babies, children, the young, do not provide information, they present us with life in its essential form. We must become adequate to recognise again and heed those ancient, perennial directives which once urged us to live, when we ourselves were in a state of grace and the felicity of being was strong within us.

Instead, something dreadful is happening to us. We become more or less willing victims of an onslaught of things and fashions, which we can withstand or not depending on our capacity to discriminate the good and useful from the superfluous and overtly damaging.

Particularly where our children are concerned our nearsightedness verges on the pathological. The children give us love; we give them things. The children ask for our companionship; we give them television and computers. The children demand that they be allowed to walk, to run, to move, to explore their splendid universe; we paralyse them in vehicles, in cages, in restricted soul-killing environments. The children invite dialogue; we give them food, a bottle, a pacifier to compensate for a lethargic indifference that renders us inert. Above all, the children demand meaning, and they are given none and so their spirit shrivels. They do not know their world; they do not know themselves.

They come to life disposed to love and their love is not allowed to find expression. They are condemned to the bleak desolation, akin to hell, of ceasing to love – grace withered, the felicity of being destroyed. These are the children born to endless night.

A sombre picture, but for a great number of the world's children it is a true picture, true enough to awaken our alertness, an alertness dulled by the horrors of heinous crimes committed against other great numbers of children – rape, incest, murder, mutilation, prostitution, every possible violation of their defenseless young bodies, their minds, their spirits. These overt crimes are bruited and the call to action on their behalf has sounded. The call to action against the covert crimes has not been voiced for the sinister reason that they are perceived to be virtues.

What to do? Accept the children's gentle invitation to follow with them nature's firm and clear directives, to bask in the benevolent glow of their inherent grace, to pursue with them the felicity of being.

As parents, as educators, we tend to be ponderous – devoid, in fact, of grace. In everyday terminology, we need to lighten up, to rid ourselves of superfluous preoccupations, to rid the child's environment of useless things. From the very beginning of its existence we must allow ourselves to enjoy the child's company, recognise its dignity, respect its freedom and, above all, have faith in the wholesomeness of its vigorous endeavours. We have to admire its efforts, rejoice in its achievements and learn not to intrude with our anxieties, our undue expectations, our fears – for these are all obstructions to the sanity of its interaction with the environment.

As Maria Montessori says, "the child learns through spontaneous, meaningful activity." The ability to recognise the meaning in the child's activity is a fascinating aptitude well worth pursuing. Observation is the fundamental art required of all scientists, most certainly of all educators, and most particularly of all parents.

"Yes," we object, "but it takes time." Indeed. Yet time, the sense of endless time, is a condition for allowing the felicity of being to flower. Haste, where children are concerned, is ugly and damaging. For them, because they are following life's rhythms and must not be impeded from doing so. For us, because it makes our perception ragged and tatters our soul.

A child who is allowed the freedom to learn all the essential disciplines of its environment through spontaneous activity, driven by 'the creative urge of life,' will know itself. A child who is given the absolute assurance that its existence has profound meaning to those who gave it life, will never have to search for meaning. A child who is allowed to participate as a contributing member of its family and every milieu it further encounters, will become responsible for itself and capable of assuming responsibility for others. Such a child will grow strong and free and hardy, its initial grace intact, its felicity of being an ineradicable given. It will become an individual not needy of a group to give it power and purpose, but a fully functioning, independent element in an enlightened, interdependent society.

In *The Absorbent Mind* (Chapter XXIV - *Cohesion in the Social Unit*), Maria Montessori gives the following description: "The example of a society where social integration exists can be given: it is the cohesive society of young children, achieved by the magic powers of nature.

"We must consider it and treasure it where it is actually being created, because neither character nor sentiments can be given through teaching: they are the product of life.

Cohesive society, however, is not the same as the organised society that rules the destiny of man. It is merely the last phase in the evolution of the child; it is the almost divine and mysterious creation of something resembling a social embryo."

This is the embryo of the enlightened, interdependent society towards which as a species we are stumbling, erratically, but most certainly following evolutionary directives in the same manner that each child follows the directives which urge it towards its own construction.

Humanity evolves in the magnificent environment that is our earth, the earth which brought us forth and to which we shall return, content, if our life has been well lived.

St. Francis of Assisi, in one of the most exquisite songs of praise ever created, thus celebrates the earth:

Laudato si', mi Signore, per sora nostra madre terra, la quale ne sustenta et governa, et produce diversi fructi con caloriti fiori et herba --

'Be praised, my Lord, for sister our mother earth, who sustains and governs us, and produces diverse fruits with colourful flowers and grass' and thus our death --

Laudato si', mi Signore, per sora nostra morte corporale, da la quale nullu homo vivente po skappare.

'Be praised, my Lord, for sister our physical death, from whom no living man can escape.'

There is an extraordinary companionableness in 'sister our mother earth,' without which the joy of living would not exist and in 'sister our physical death,' without which there would be no evolution. The grace of our existence springs from love for 'sister our mother earth' and the comfort of knowing that we are sustained and governed by her, however much we may be misled into thinking it is we who govern her.

The grace of our existence also lies in the sure knowledge that we are finite and no living human can escape 'sister our physical death.' The felicity of being is contingent upon a deep awareness and joyful acceptance of these two 'sisters' whom St. Francis, with all the humility of his spiritual wisdom, chose to celebrate.

Deep awareness and joyful acceptance – these are two human phenomena whose development is allowed, helped and encouraged in splendidly explicit silence by a Montessori prepared environment for children three-to-six years of age; provided that those who prepare this environment are themselves fully aware of its potential for becoming a *milieu divin*, an ambience which provides all elements necessary for the children to construct themselves and, together, create the embryo of a perfect human society.

The Montessori prepared environment, if well understood and implemented, is itself deserving of silent fanfare, not only for its uncommon common sense, but also for an aspect which has consistently been disregarded and overlooked.

Montessori pedagogy has been held culpable for not taking into account the child's emotional development. The withholding of unsolicited praise, of uncalled-for caresses, is perceived as a lack of warmth and nurturing. The visible expression of 'any unnecessary help is a hindrance to development' is considered a form of malice.

Another source of the prevalent misconception that children's emotional life is disregarded is the austerity of the environment, which nevertheless contains, implicit and intelligible, all physical, intellectual and spiritual properties, abstract and concrete, aesthetic and scientific, of the phenomena of human existence, thus giving the child's inherent love of life the possibility to become rooted in truth and reality through meaningful, spontaneous activity.

The prosaically termed 'Exercises of Practical Life' contain in essence all the elements of the domestic household, and these translate into the greater human household with all the extraordinarily complex, varied, multifaceted ramifications of 'Care of the Environment, Indoor and Outdoor,' 'Care of the Person,' 'Grace and Courtesy' and 'Movement.'

The sensorial materials give the child the possibility of individually recreating and becoming intimately knowledgeable about the abstractions it took humanity hundreds of thousands of years to reach; to acquire habits of the intelligence such as observation and classification which are the basis of all science; to make aesthetic decisions.

The language materials allow the children to enrich and explore language – that specifically human tool, the instrument of collective thought – absorbed passionately and insatiably since the very beginning of their existence, making their own its poetry, its scientific exactness and precision, its beauty and vitality, an investment in enchantment for their entire life.

The math materials elevate sensorial classification to number and measure, converting it into a transmissible science with myriad applications. They offer the tranquillity of dealing with absolutes, and the peace – or disquiet – of infinity.

Each piece of material is unique, isolating one activity, one concept, never to be repeated in any other piece of material, so giving luminous clarity to the message, the information, the exercise it contains. The child is given the possibility of uninterrupted concentration, of voluntary and consistent repetition, the sense of endless time without which there is no learning, no abstraction, no incarnation and thus no creation or recreation.

In this deceptively simple environment with its discreetly named areas – Practical Life, Sensorial, Language and Math – the seeds are sown for every aspect of human endeavour – the arts and architecture, music and dance, theatre and literature, science and technology, etc., etc., etc.

Never to be forgotten is that the stereotypical Montessori prepared environment known as the *Casa dei Bambini* is the result of delicate, precise choices made by many generations of children, of all races, of all nationalities, of every socio-cultural origin, beginning with the small group gathered in *Via dei Marsi*, in the *Quartiere San Lorenzo*, in Rome, in 1907.

Our premise is that children are in a state of grace. Grace is life's given, not ours to give. As parents, as educators, we must perceive our children's grace to be a sacred trust and heed the silent mandate to ensure to the utmost of our ability, with the intelligence of love, their felicity of being, thereby becoming worthy of the unconditional benevolence with which they accept us – their parents, their educators. ❖

Renilde Montessori is Maria Montessori's youngest grandchild. She lived and traveled with her grandmother as a child. She attended Montessori schools and finished her secondary studies in the Montessori Lyceum of Amsterdam. In 1968 she joined the Montessori movement, first as a personal assistant to her father, Mario Montessori. She obtained her primary Montessori diploma from the Washington Montessori Institute in 1971 and has since then been lecturer, trainer and AMI examiner. From 1989 to 1995 she was Director of Training at The Foundation for Montessori Education in Toronto. In September of 1995 she became the General Secretary of AMI.

A Montessori Community for Adolescents

Camillo Grazzini and Baiba Krumins G.

Foreword

When I was asked to prepare a blurb for this presentation, I decided it was important to give some background information on its origin. Thus I indicated that the paper was originally written for the *Adolescent Colloquium* which was held in Cleveland and organized by someone whom I both esteem and consider a good friend, David Kahn.

In the blurb I indicated when the *Adolescent Colloquium* was held: in October 1996. That is almost two years ago and, in a certain sense, that is a long time ago. Someone even told me this paper may already be obsolete. *Obsolete* reminds me of those words and expressions that have fallen into disuse but can still be found in a dictionary. They have a little cross next to them, as though to say, "Rest in peace, you are no longer needed, you are obsolete." Of course, for all the words that become obsolete, there are new ones that come along and quite often they simply substitute for the old ones. Whether or not this paper is obsolete depends on whether or not something new has been done, something that has radically changed the situation. In any case, although it does not bear this year's date, the paper mostly draws on what Maria Montessori says, and what she says is as good as timeless.

Finally, in the blurb I specifically pointed out the concluding section on *What Needs To Be Done*. What needs to be done is a consequence of the earlier parts of the paper; it is also the most important part. It indicates the themes, proposals, guidelines, for an exploration that could lead to a unification of the adolescent experiments and to the establishment of *erdkinder* communities. These suggestions, made almost two years ago, await relevant responses and answers. Therefore, these suggestions or questions are still valid, or perhaps blessedly obsolete, depending on what has been done in the last two years. What has been done is what we shall be hearing about this afternoon when Peter Gebhardt-Seele speaks about *A Montessori Erdkinder Program, Practical Considerations*.

Introduction

Before considering *erdkinder* specifically, let us recall what Montessori says about *work*, the adult's work and the child's work, because this provides the background for understanding more clearly what Montessori says about adolescents.

In *The Secret of Childhood*, Maria Montessori makes it very clear how the adult and the child each have their own work, in their own world, with its own laws. Thus, speaking about the adult, she says: "It is the adult's task to build an environment superimposed on nature, an outward work calling for activity and intelligent effort; it is what we call productive work, and is by its nature social, collective and organised."[1] This work is regulated by norms, the laws of the society, and these differ from one human group to another. But, as Montessori points out, there are some basic laws which are common to all human beings and to all times. These are the laws which are rooted in the very nature of human beings and are concerned with the nature of the work itself.

One of these basic laws is the division of labour: human beings differ from one another and this leads to specialisation of work; and also specialisation of work leads to, or reinforces, individual differences in human beings. There is also another basic law, one which refers to the individual's own work, and that is the law of the least effort, or the law of minimum effort, according to which the individual seeks to attain the maximum productivity with the least amount of work. This particular law is also extremely important, not because of a desire to work as little as possible, but because it means obtaining more for less expenditure of energy. Indeed it is such a useful principle that it is applied to machines complementing human labour. Montessori calls these basic laws "the good laws," "social and natural laws of adaptation to work." (Of course deviations can also arise: the law of minimum effort, for example, can degenerate to the principle of having others work "so that I may profit by their labour while I rest.")

About the child, Montessori says that, though he cannot take part in the adult's work, he is also "a worker and producer" and has his own work to do, that of "producing a man." This work is completely different, and therefore the laws and characteristics of the work are completely different. Instead of the adult's division of labour, we find the child's "*I* want to do it" or "help me to do it ***by myself***." Instead of the minimum or least effort, we find the law of maximum effort: the child, says Montessori, "wastes an immense amount of energy over an insubstantial end ... and in the exact execution of every detail." The adult is externally motivated whilst the child is internally motivated; the adult uses and transforms the environment whilst the child uses the environment for interior ends; the adult is exhausted by his work whilst the child leaves his work "completely refreshed and full of energy."

The reason for these differences and contrasts is always the same: the adult works to perfect the environment whilst the child works to perfect being itself. Because the child and his work are so different, so alien to the world of the adult, Montessori goes so far as to describe him as "an extra-social being par excellence," in the sense of one who cannot take an active part in society's productive labours or in the regulation of its organisation.

Then, with adolescence or the third plane of development, the individual becomes a *social newborn*.[2] What does Montessori mean when she identifies the adolescent in this manner? Well, first of all, she does ***not*** mean the birth of a social being in the ordinary sense. Human beings are, by their nature and throughout their lives, social beings; they belong, after all, to a social species. Thus no baby can grow up to be a truly human being in isolation from his group; otherwise we have only "the savage of Aveyron." What she ***does*** mean is that the individual is now born to a new life: he is a newborn adult, a newborn member of adult society, a newborn participant in adult society; he is newly born as one who ***can*** "take an active part in society's productive labours or in the regulation of its organisation."

Adolescent needs and Montessori's answer

Knowledge of the adolescent's characteristics, physical and physiological, psychological and behavioural, constitutes the underlying basis and determines the overall structure of any institution which is planned or set up to function as a secondary school.

The characteristics of adolescence are well known to all of us.[3] Suffice it to say that they are centred on the process of transformation we call puberty, which means the creation of the adult from the child. Thus the characteristics are nothing other than the expression and manifestation of nature itself, of nature's own demands. They are the characteristics of the "social man who does not yet exist but who is already born" (Clio, 64); of the social man who "is created but has not yet reached full development."[4] With this new plane of creation we have, as Montessori writes, "an epoch of inner revelations and of social sensibilities." (Schocken, 134)

This new being, this new individual that is the adolescent, has to reach full development as a "social man," has to prepare himself for his entry into society, has to prepare himself for active participation in a society based on adult work or "productive work" as Montessori calls it. So what does he do? What has he to do? Montessori, comparing the life of the human being to stages in the life of Christ, likens the adolescent to the twelve-year-old Christ who, "forgetful of his family, is heard to discuss with the doctors" and who later "devotes himself to manual work and exercises a craft."[5] (Schocken, 134)

The adolescent Christ, in other words, is initiated into the world of adult work. However, we are not meant to interpret this in an overly literal fashion: it is not that the adolescent takes up specific training for some profession or vocation, something that would be totally inappropriate anyway from the point of view of our modern, complex and, above all, rapidly changing society. Thus, in *Education and Peace* Montessori writes, "The child by the age of twelve should already be taking an active part in social life; he should be producing, selling and working, not in order to learn a trade, but because working means coming into contact with life, participating in the building of supernature."[6]

The *erdkinder* community, then, is Montessori's answer to the vital needs of adolescence. This answer is actually a set of specific and particular work establishments or work environments that belong both to nature (the earth or the land) and to supernature (the works of man). Through these two, nature and supernature, it is possible to satisfy the needs and tendencies, and therefore the requirements, of adolescents.

The environment as the key for each plane of education

For the purpose of a thorough grounding in the Montessori approach or *method*, we always separate and explain the components as (and in this order):

- the environment
- the materials (motives for activity generating experiences which are constructive in the literal sense of the word)
- the adult, directress or teacher (custodian of the prepared environment; the link to the environment and materials, and to work and culture in general, guardian and keeper of the flame, the one who fans the fires of interest).

Montessori also speaks of the environment in a more inclusive sense when she speaks of a trinity made up of the child, the adult and the environment. And *environment* can be understood in even more all-embracing terms, and this is the sense favoured by modern sociology: from the restricted meaning of the physical surroundings we have come to the idea of the surrounding conditions, be these physical, psychological, social, moral or of other types.[7] The educational environment then becomes not only the physical environment but also everything that is found there, from the most concrete to the most intangible.

Yet the power and importance of the *physical* environment should never be underestimated, especially from the point of view of development and education. Thus in 1936 (London), Montessori actually identified her planes of education by using expressions which refer to a physical environment. Following the example of Friedrich W. A. Froebel's (1782-1852) famous *Kindergarten* (the first "garden of infants" was opened in Germany in 1840), Dr. Montessori coined analogous expressions using German terminology: quite remarkable and arresting expressions of which *erdkinder* is one (and now the only one that is still used). Thus she called the children from birth to twelve years *die Moebelkinder* or "the furniture children," as those who live mainly at home and in school. (Of course this was later changed to make a greater distinction between the first plane and the second plane children. The latter became, if you like, "the children of the cosmos.") The adolescents (ranging in age from twelve to eighteen) she called *die erdkinder* which literally translates as "the earth children," but *earth* has to be understood as the soil and not the planet. Thus in the English language we find "the children of the soil" or "the land children" or "the rural children."

Young people from eighteen to twenty years of age Montessori called *die Wuestenkinder* which means "the children of the wilderness" or "the children of the desert." Montessori explains as follows: "If young people at a certain point are called upon to take an active part in the life of humanity, they must first feel that they have a great mission to accomplish and prepare themselves for it. They must have the chance to meditate upon it a little." (Copenhagen 1937, reprinted in *Educa-*

tion and Peace, Clio, 70). Lastly, adults from the age of twenty on Montessori called the "men of the universe," *die Universum-Menschen*.[8]

Although all of Montessori's expressions coined in the thirties refer to a physical environment, only some of these environments are meant to be literally lived in, in a bodily sense; the others have to be lived in with the powers of the mind or spirit. It is significant that the former refer to the *creative* planes of development, infancy and adolescence. Both of these are tied to a very specific physical environment.

Thus for adolescents there are many environments that could permit them to experience and participate in adult work, but Montessori explicitly states all the reasons that these adolescents should live, work and study in the country.

The *erdkinder* environment

The one element that is absolutely fundamental and irreplaceable, that we absolutely cannot renounce as far as the adolescents are concerned, is therefore the *erde*: the earth as the soil that we can take in our hands; the earth as the land which we can till and cultivate in order to make it bear fruit; the earth as the countryside where we can live in conditions that are healthy for both body and spirit.

Erde for the adolescent does not mean the countryside or a farm as a destination for outings, or for occasional or even regular visits and short-term stays; what it does mean is the physical place, the physical environment, where the adolescents live their lives. Then, within this primary general environment, certain specific establishments or work environments are to be found, and these gradually come to be managed by the adolescents together with the adults.

Ideally, the *erdkinder* community would be located on a large estate "with trees (possibly including woods), near the sea, and at the same time near a city" (Clio, 81). The specific establishments or work environments mentioned by Montessori are: the boarding school which includes the "land children's hostel"; the farm; the guesthouse; the store or shop for the sale of fresh produce and craftwork. (Montessori comments that the last-named could be set up in the nearest big town.)

In the Italian language Montessori uses the old expressions for guesthouse and shop: *locanda* which can translate as inn and *bottega* which can mean not only *shop* but also *workshop* and, therefore, evokes the idea of artisans and craftsmen. In this way, she recalls medieval enterprises which, in and of themselves, are really quite modest and familiar but which played a large part in the human and social interchange of medieval life.

By means of the various establishments and work environments that have been mentioned there comes into existence that *erdkinder* community which Montessori calls a "school of experience in the elements of social life," that is, in the elements of the life of society (Schocken, 102) and which she also describes as a "centre for study and work." (Schocken, 105) The value and the significance of the *erdkinder* does not reside in the countryside as such (otherwise any school in the country would do) but in working the land, where this is understood as an introduction to both nature and civilization. Or, better still, in the value of work in general, "with its wide social connotations of productiveness and earning power." (Schocken, 106)

The idea of work as part of education, as having a truly educational as opposed to utilitarian purpose, can be considered as "a development of that principle ... known as the *exercises of practical life*," (Schocken, 104) though with the adolescents the independence to be acquired is "economic independence in the field of society." (Schocken, 105)

Erdkinder and the urban compromise

I have always found it disconcerting when the adjective *urban* is used to qualify the Montessori term *erdkinder* because the one automatically invalidates the other. The expression, *erdkinder – an urban compromise* (reflecting a fairly recent and rather particular kind of interpretation of Montessori adolescent education), is fundamentally flawed, both from a Montessori point of view and from a linguistic point of view. An *urban erdkinder* community, translated into ordinary English, means a "city landchildren" community or, to put it even more dramatically, an "urban rural children" community. This is as absurd as it sounds – a real contradiction in terms.

Whilst I consider the setting up of an authentic *erdkinder* programme to be an initiative of enormous interest and importance to the Montessori community as a whole, I find that the *urban compromise* has nothing to do with Maria Montessori's vision, intentions or hopes. The urban compromise was, and is, an attempt to provide a new kind of school for adolescents and it would have been better simply to identify it as such, without any reference to Montessori and without any sort of Montessori justification.[9] Furthermore, exactly in what way and to what extent does this new kind of secondary school, the *urban compromise* school, differ from the Montessori Lyceum found in Holland?

Certainly more than twenty years of the *urban compromise* in the United States represents a noteworthy experience: a noteworthy experience for acquiring an in-depth knowledge of adolescent psychology from a Montessori point of view; a noteworthy experience for acquiring the breadth of knowledge involved in drawing up a unified curriculum for a plan of studies for this new kind of secondary school, established along general Montessori lines. In fact, it has been pointed out that "the practitioners have made a wealth of observations." But has such a unified curriculum been drawn up or compiled?

Above all else, however, these years and years of the *urban compromise* have made it clear that the appropriate environment has been lacking: the very environment which constitutes the keystone for an *erdkinder* community experiment.

Past experience as a guide for the organization of an *erdkinder* community

What is particularly new and revolutionary about Montessori's reform for the education of adolescents is the idea of a more or less self-regulating community which is located in the country, that undertakes various kinds of enterprises, enterprises that provide the adolescents with varied experiences of adult or "productive" work, and which offers an opportunity to develop practical abilities in organization, management and administration. Consequently it may be useful to have a look at analogous communities and institutions, past or present, in order to explore the practical problems involved in running such a community, and to examine the solutions that have been found or devised.

For example, after the Second World War (1939-45) in Italy, as well as in other countries, various institutions were created to help children and adolescents. These were children and adolescents whose fathers had been killed as soldiers during the war, or who had lost both parents because of air raids, or whom the war had left mutilated, etc; children, in other words, who had been deeply scarred by the war, injured both in body and soul.[10]

Other types of institutions have been created for the moral and social rehabilitation of minors or juveniles, institutions aimed at re-educating adolescents who are socially maladjusted for whatever reason. The very first experiment of this kind was the *Junior Republic*, founded in 1897 by William George in Freeville, New York. The most famous of these, however, is *Boys Town*, which was the subject of a well-known film starring Spencer Tracy. *Boys Town* was founded in 1917, in Omaha, Nebraska, by the Reverend Edward Joseph Flanagan (1886-1948). His aim was "to gather together lost or stray boys, saving them from vagabondage and delinquency, and to educate them according to a particular method of education that would develop a sense of personal responsibility."

Maria Montessori herself, after participating at the 8th International Montessori Congress in San Remo, went in September 1949 to visit the *Villaggio del Fanciullo* (or *Boys' Village*) in Tor Marangone in the province of Rome. Founded in August, 1945, by Monsignor John Patrick Carroll-Abbing and Don Antonio Rivolta, the *Boys' Village* became a community of "the children of the war who through horror, pain and sorrow have awakened to love," as Monsignor Carroll-Abbing wrote toward the end of his book, *A Chance to Live*.[11]

However, the two kinds of institutions described above are always of limited interest for the organization of a Montessori *erdkinder* community. Since the former and the latter are quite distinct in terms of the community members, the aims and therefore the pedagogical approach disappear. Pedagogically or educationally speaking, it may be more interesting and relevant to explore and examine past experiments belonging to the *progressive education* tradition.

Thus we find that the very first experimental school was founded in 1889 in England by Cecil Reddie (1858-1932). He founded Abbotsholme School as "a community of educators and scholars, with practical and collective teaching." In Reddie's thinking, "all schools ought to be communities, miniature commonwealths or states, as they were in the Middle Ages."

Reddie's school then inspired the founding of others, not only in England but also in France and Germany. Thus Hermann Lietz (1868-1919), the German educator, was inspired to found the *Landerziehungsheime* or "education homes in the country." For example, the one for youths from twelve to sixteen years of age was founded in Haubinda, Thuringia, in 1901.

Most of these schools emphasised, to varying degrees, the freeing of the child from adult pressures and the provision of a rich and varied community life.[12]

Obviously, these past experiments that were undertaken by Montessori's contemporaries can be used as a source of ideas, so long as we continue to bear in mind all the Montessori experiences that have taken, and are taking, place in this country. The point is always to see if there are relevant non-Montessori experiments that can provide guidelines for the organizational aspect involved in setting up an *erdkinder* community, especially when it comes to the coordination of all the various activities or enterprises.

Maria Montessori herself says that, "The organization must be conceived in such a way that the adolescents do not feel in any way out of place as a consequence, and so that they may adapt in any surroundings. The adaptation will then manifest itself by *collaboration*, source of the social harmony which accelerates individual progress." (Clio, 74)

Of course an important part of any community or organized setup is discipline, and Montessori says: "A severe discipline ought to exist ... in order to assure an ordered inner life and the unity of aims." (Clio, 81) She also points out the following: "...in order that individual action be simultaneously free and fruitful, it must be confined within certain limits and obey certain rules which constitute (give) the necessary direction (guidance). The limits and rules must be observed by the entire institution... The rules, like the materials for the youngest children, must be *necessary and sufficient* to maintain order and assure progress." (Clio, 74) With the right kind of organization, Montessori foresees that the result will be not only self-discipline but a proof that self-discipline is an aspect of individual liberty and the chief factor of success in life." (Schocken, 113)

Although the organisation of the *erdkinder* community can always evolve on the basis of actual experience, it is also wise to explore this matter beforehand. For this reason, I suggested to Mario Montessori Jr. in 1974 (when he questioned me on the subject of *erdkinder*) that an exploratory investigation be undertaken. Information and documentation could be gathered on the main institutions for adolescents from the point of view of their organisation. On this basis, a comparison could be made so as to identify the common or general characteristics as opposed to the distinguishing features that are specific to particular experiments.

Philosophy and practice

All the institutions mentioned earlier, as well as the *erdkinder* community itself, incorporate two dimensions: that of the ideals or guiding philosophy which represents the aims of the institution and the operational one, organizational and practical, by means of which the aims of the institution are realized or reached.

In accordance with the different modes of viewing the human being and his destiny, it is possible to identify two distinct types of pedagogical policies or approaches to education. The first is *remedial*, and we can think of this as being *reconstructive* in its aims. The second is *preventive*, and its nature and aims are *constructive*. (In her early writings, Montessori often used the expression *hygienic*, in the sense that hygiene or hygienic treatment promotes health and prevents illness, whereas ordinary medicine focuses on curing illness.)

The remedial approach seeks to redress harm done, to find a satisfactory solution to situations and events involving serious risk and injury of a psychic or psychological nature. The remedial approach is therefore causatively based, focusing on *symptoms* and using "any valid means to halt damage done, to overcome the difficulty involved, to resolve some unfortunate or intolerable situation..." Educational institutions of a remedial nature are therefore set up as a response, one which is certainly admirable on a human and social level, to dramatic problems and deviations which are already clearly evident in the adolescent or young person. (The *cause* is always a story of violence of some kind or another, violence to which the young person has been subjected.)

Montessori's approach, however, is always constructive, finalistically based, and depends on the right kind of intervention at the right time in order to prevent problems from arising and prevent harm from being inflicted. And this is true for each and every plane of development. (Incidentally, this is one of the reasons that I have always considered terms such as *remedy* and *remedial* inappropriate in a Montessori context.)

Therefore, from this point of view, the *erdkinder* community is Montessori's instrument, an original and innovative instrument, for preventing the development of serious problems during adolescence, and for preventing deviations from arising within the adolescent. In other words, the *erdkinder* is always a *constructive* (rather than a remedial) environment, one which therefore fosters healthy, or normal, development.

The original and positive philosophy of *erdkinder*

The philosophy which inspires and which has to govern the *erdkinder*, is therefore completely different to (in some ways even the opposite of) that of the institutions founded by Father Flanagan or Monsignor Carroll-Abbing or others like them. We could almost say that the Montessori philosophy works on the positive, whilst that of the other institutions mentioned works on the negative (perhaps inevitably so during those particular historical periods).

A painful illustration of the difference between the two philosophies can be found in Maria Montessori's own life and work: her nomination for the Nobel peace prize in 1949 and the subsequent non-conferment. In June of that same year, the Italian press spoke of two formidable rival nominations backed by the Anglo-Saxon world: the International Red Cross and the Bernadotte Foundation. Reporting Montessori's point of view, the press wrote thus: "No one is indifferent to the merits of these two institutions. This does not mean, however, that they have contributed to the cause of peace; on the contrary, they both presuppose the existence of war, and exist insofar as war exists..." And the press concluded by saying, "Montessori's position is quite different; Montessori *creates* peace."[13]

In any case, the Norwegian Nobel Committee (the committee delegated to award the peace prize "to those who have made the greatest contribution to the peace of mankind") assigned the 1949 prize to John Boyd Orr, a British scientist who was the first director-general of FAO (the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization). In other words, it was decided to honour an institution which stood midway between the two positions: it provided remedial measures and brought hope for the future.[14]

Also, for the *erdkinder* community we have to ask the right questions, those which are relevant to a *constructive* pedagogical approach. The question is: what sort of structure or organization and what sort of "help to life," the life of the adolescent, must be provided, such that these adolescents become adults who are builders of peace in a multicultural society which is in rapid evolution?

For the aim of the *erdkinder* community is also that of contributing to the "reconstruction of society" (Clio, 59) by fostering within these adolescents, who are "social newborns," (Clio, 64) *admiration for, and understanding of, the life and work of humanity.* (Clio, 60)

Which adolescents?

If it is true that Montessori education is based on planes of development which are quite distinct and yet interdependent, insofar as together they form a single unity, then those who enter the *erdkinder* community should be mainly adolescents coming from Montessori elementary schools, in the same way that those entering Montessori elementary should be children coming from the *Casa dei Bambini*.

The *erdkinder* is a community of adolescents of different ages: in Montessori's thinking, all the different ages from 12 to 18 years. Of course, with only early adolescence in mind, the ages will be restricted to the range 12 to 15. In any case, the *erdkinder* community, age restricted or otherwise, is open to adolescents of both sexes and of every race, creed or social class. Furthermore, Montessori also specifically points out that the *erdkinder* is "intended for normal children, but those who are slow or backward, suffering from some psychological maladjustment (mental barriers, timidity) may be admitted..." (Schocken, 119)

It would, however, be better if, in the beginning, only those adolescents without problems or handicaps of any kind were accepted for the *erdkinder*. Adopting this policy, just for the initial phase, is important both in relation to the larger community in the locality of the *erdkinder* and in relation to the parents who are interested in this initiative.

This would avoid an old and common misconception: the Montessori approach must not be seen as a mainly remedial approach but as the constructive approach that it truly is. Furthermore, this policy would serve to reassure those parents who may be worried about the risks involved in such a new undertaking.

The staff or personnel

The *erdkinder* is not only a community which is set up ***for*** adolescents and made up ***of*** adolescents, it is also a community which includes experts (both Montessori and non-Montessori) who, undertaking their own specific tasks, work ***with*** the adolescents.

The *erdkinder* community team of adults or experts is made up of teachers, both living in and also coming in from outside, and "technicians" or "technical instructors." Thus Montessori mentions, for example: "an instructor for agriculture and gardening, a business manager for the shop and hotel (guesthouse)" etc., and also personnel "specially qualified in practical work, in cooking, or sewing and mending, and ... an intelligent handyman capable of giving instruction in various trades while he helps in the daily work." (Schocken, 120) About the visiting teachers (that is, those who are not living in), Montessori says that they "should have the proper qualifications for teaching in secondary schools" and that there should not be too many but "rather the minimum number who can undertake a group of related subjects, which can be subsequently separated according to the needs of the school." (Schocken, 120) Thus we have the various experts in practical work and those who are expert in the various disciplines of study. To this team we could add medical and nursing personnel, and also the Montessori experts.

In the light of what Montessori herself writes, the problem of training Montessori teachers for working in the *erdkinder* does not exist. In the section where Montessori speaks about the teachers for the *erdkinder*, she says various things (for example that they should be young and open-minded) but never does she speak of Montessori professionals. Yet, according to some Montessorians, this is the category that represents the optimum for starting and developing an *erdkinder* programme.

If this category truly represents the ideal type of expert or teacher for the needs of the *erdkinder*, it certainly is necessary to set up a new kind of Montessori institution, namely a teacher training centre for adolescence or *erdkinder*. Such a centre would presumably provide the two standard parts of Montessori training: the psychological aspect (Montessori theory) and specifically adolescent psychology; and the pedagogical aspect, that is Montessori's pedagogical approach. The training provided by such an institution would solve the problem of Montessorians who have no experience with adolescents, and also that of the teachers of adolescents who have no Montessori experience or training. One could even envisage a third category of students: those who have neither experience with adolescents nor Montessori training and experience.

However, this view of training for *erdkinder* has either overlooked or taken for granted another aspect, one which is absolutely essential for the *erdkinder*: the key role played by teachers expert in the various specific disciplines (foreign languages, biology, mathematics, etc.). From this perspective, it is completely counter-productive and also contrary to Montessori's thinking, to have individuals who are not expert in the specific disciplines (be they Montessorians or non-Montessorians) working with the adolescents on the academic curriculum. Nor is it necessary for these *erdkinder* teachers to have Montessori training or experience. What ***is*** required of them, instead, is a high level of specialised qualifications and knowledge, combined with a sympathy for Montessori principles and an unconditional acceptance of their application in the programme and work.

Thus Montessori herself, speaking about these young teachers who should have the proper qualifications for teaching in secondary schools, says: "But that does not mean that they will be free to teach by their own methods. On the contrary, they must adopt the methods of the (Montessori) institution for their collaboration to be effective." (Clio, 82) Consequently, the most that would be required is a brief orientation course for those who have no knowledge whatsoever of Montessori and this would not require the setting up of a special institution.

America, however, until quite recently, was looking for a way to set up an AMI Montessori centre and/or course for *erdkinder*. We are of the contrary opinion: in an *erdkinder* community (a type of educational setup which is already highly unusual, not to say revolutionary) the role of Montessorians, as such, should be limited to that of directing, coordinating and integrating the work of the various adults, so that the *erdkinder* functions according to the Montessori ideas in general. Therefore, what needs to be set up is not an *erdkinder* teacher training centre, but a single permanent organizing committee for the whole country, a committee made up of Montessorians and including, as *ex officio* members, a representative from the AMI Head Office and another from AMI/USA. This committee can then appoint a national coordinator. The task of this committee would be to coordinate all the experiments already existing in the country, and to oversee new initiatives in such a way that a reform of the secondary school is gradually brought about, a reform which reflects ever more faithfully Dr. Montessori's ideas.

Another possibility also exists, that is to say an initiative which could be undertaken in addition to the above. The funds and resources that would have been tied up in an *erdkinder* teacher training centre could, instead, be used for setting up an actual *erdkinder* community. This could then serve as a model and point of reference for the whole country, as a sort of national *erdkinder* which would be open to adolescents from all parts of the country and which could provide a physical base for all further initiatives (for example for the committee, for conferences, etc.). This is possible because for *erdkinder* (as opposed to Children's House or elementary), there is no practical or Montessori reason requiring a *local* physical location, and there are many practical reasons favouring a larger establishment in the service of the national community or society.

Plan of studies and work

What Montessori calls "the physical care" of adolescents must, she says, "include special attention to the physiological condition of adolescence." (Schocken, 113) Specialized and periodic medical check-ups, special attention to nutrition by means of an appropriate diet, swimming, etc., these are all part of the programme.

Then, as Montessori informs us, "Study need not be restricted by the curricula of existing secondary schools and still less do we need to make use of their methods..." Moreover, "the aim should be to widen education instead of restricting it." (Schocken, 111)

Nonetheless, it would be wise to undertake an exploratory research on an academic curriculum for the first three years of secondary school, a two-pronged research: first in terms of Montessori's ideas and secondly, in terms of national or state requirements.

The Montessori research should consist of two parts: a general part and then a more specific analytical part. The former would mean identifying the general principles underlying the programme, principles which give the framework and set the *climate* of the teaching programme. The latter would examine what Dr. Montessori proposes as a programme for each subject, even though she really only gives us an outline.

Thus, "to open the way to the possibilities of the adolescent for personal expression," (Clio, 76) Montessori indicates various activities of a musical, linguistic and artistic nature. Then, as formative or "creative elements" for the human psyche, Montessori identifies moral education, mathematics and languages. (Clio, 76) Lastly, "to put the adolescent into relation with present civilization," Montessori specifies "the study of the earth and living nature" (geology, biology, etc.); "studies relating to human progress and to the building of civilization" (physics, chemistry, etc); and "the history of humanity" (including a special study on the present state of one's own country).

Montessori's programme, however (as we know very well), does not involve only "studies" but also "work." Apart from the types of work already mentioned earlier (working the land, etc.), Montessori also speaks of work relating to daily life, *practical life* activities in other words. At this stage, they concern the maintenance of the environment and all that it contains: everything that in our society goes under the name of DIY or *do-it-yourself*, and that are, in fact, activities which adults undertake in their free time. Montessori comments that "work does not hinder study, but even makes it possible to study better." (Schocken, 104)

The research into the national or state requirements concerning the academic curriculum should focus, above all else, on the targets that are set for each subject area: the knowledge and the skills to be reached by the end of the first three-year-cycle of adolescence. In this regard, Montessori writes, "A schema, written in large letters, posted in an obvious position, clearly indicating the degree of study demanded by the laws governing secondary education, constitutes an excellent stimulus and gives the directives" without imposing obligations (Clio, 81). (See also the *Dalton Laboratory Plan*, 1922. Clearly Montessori's pupil, Helen Parkhurst took over the idea of this particular means of stimulus and verification for her plan of education.)

Back in 1974, I suggested to Mario Montessori Jr. that he ask those involved with the *erdkinder* experiment to procure the necessary information on state requirements. So perhaps this has already been done.

Anyway, when these two kinds of research have been completed, a work of comparison can be undertaken (for the Montessori programme and the state curriculum) so that a unified programme for each subject or discipline can be drawn up. This would be very reassuring for parents and very helpful for those who are anxious about the academic aspect of their children's secondary education. Actually this is a worry most parents have, and perhaps particularly so in the case of the *erdkinder* community. Indeed, parents need to be told what Montessori tells us: "It is not a question of excluding the preparation for the intellectual professions... and still less one of reducing culture. Education must, on the contrary, be very broad and very complete..." (Clio, 61)

Incidentally, it would be very helpful and useful if the existing documentation on the *erdkinder* "plan of studies and work" could be made available immediately. Since there must be a hundred or more "plans" that have been adopted in this country (the number corresponds to the number of *adolescent project* experiments going on in the United States), a few of the more significant ones could be selected. On the basis of this documentation, it would be possible to ascertain their common denominators or characteristics in relation to both the state curriculum (for the first three years of secondary school) and the application of the Montessori approach. If this work of research has not yet been done, it should be started as soon as possible.

Montessori material for *erdkinder*?

As regards any Montessori materials, educational procedures and techniques that are suitable for the first cycle of the secondary school, it is a great mistake to transfer to adolescents that which was intended for, but was not used in, elementary school. If the psychology of the individual is different during the different planes of development, then the Montessori approach must also be different (that is, the environment, the "materials," the role of the adults or "educational workers"). Even using "materials," procedures, etc., that are appropriate for the age of adolescence becomes irrelevant unless these are employed in the appropriate overall context.[15]

When it comes to "materials" for the *erdkinder*, Montessori specifically mentions a "museum of machinery" in the section where she speaks of the adolescents or land children exploring "human progress and the building up of civilization in connection with physics and chemistry, mechanics, engineering" etc. (Schocken, 117). In other words, these adolescents also explore all those machines, all those instruments (manual, mechanical, electrical, electronic, etc.) that, in Montessori's words, "have made our lives so easy."[16]

Montessori also refers to materials for mathematics when she says: "Because of this vital importance of mathematics the school must use special methods for teaching it and (must) make clear and comprehensible its elements with the help of plenty of apparatus that demonstrates the *materialized abstractions* of mathematics." (Schocken, 116)

Apart from the above, the *erdkinder* community does not need specific "Montessori materials," such as there were for the earlier ages or planes.

Mario Montessori did, over the course of time, give some guidelines for the preparation of advanced materials, especially for arithmetic, geometry and algebra. Materials such as these could clearly be included in the first cycle of the secondary school. Apart from some of the materials illustrated in Maria Montessori's book *Psicoaritmetica* (material which has not yet been sufficiently explored in depth), he proposed, for example, a course of algebra going up to quadratic equations.[17]

The *erdkinder* community in today's society

One does not have to be a sociologist to see that the philosophy dominating our modern western society is that of economic success. As a consequence, our society is sustained by an exaggerated competitiveness, a competitiveness which nonetheless does not seem to preclude individual human growth. The latter, "the formation of man" and "the development of man" to use Montessori's expressions, is in any case viewed as a component of personal success, but that success is almost always measured by the level of the individual's entrepreneurial skills.

With this outlook on life, an outlook particularly prevalent in American society, parents are willing to spend considerable sums of money on their children's education. Or rather, they are willing to do this if it means that their children can attend "quality" schools. Such schools are meant to guarantee a high level of ability and personal initiative, so that when these youngsters leave school and enter university, they already have what is considered to be the basis for future success in life.

From this point of view, we can also understand the explosion in the supply of computers to children, that is, even to children of a very young age. There are parents who, also in this way, seek to advantage their own children, in the hope that the benefits will accrue later in life.

The Montessori point of view is rather different. Whilst it is true that Montessori helps the children to become individuals fully adapted to their time and place, to the present moment of their civilization, it is also true that Maria Montessori focuses on human development rather than on acquiring specialized skills that are useful from a specifically professional or entrepreneurial point of view. In the same way, modern sociology also recommends a basic formation rather than studies of a specialized nature, aimed at particular professions.

Although American parents are willing to pay for private education, America (unlike some European countries) does not have a strong tradition of sending adolescents to boarding school. Therefore parents might well ask why they should send their sons and daughters away to an *erdkinder* community. Residential schools might be associated in their minds with children and adolescents who have problems of some kind. Therefore why should adolescents who are *normal*, who work well at school and who are well-adjusted socially, be sent away? Of course these youngsters do manifest adolescent behavior, but then again, that is part of the age, the physiological condition of being an adolescent. Furthermore, there may be parents who want a school with a competitive atmosphere for their children, who may think that a spirit of competitiveness provides a better preparation for future life and future success.

What guarantee, after all, can the *erdkinder* community offer parents? There are no existing *erdkinder* communities (in the authentic sense) to check out or inspect, and without an actual example or model of this type of secondary school, what is there to say? The only guarantee in the beginning is given by the parents' own knowledge and appreciation of the Montessori ideas and, above all, by what their children have achieved, first in the *Casa dei Bambini* and then in the Montessori elementary.

After the parents have accepted the idea of the *erdkinder* community project, they themselves have to become actively involved by becoming the promoters, propagandists and supporters of this reform; by even becoming organizers, administrators and consultants; and, lastly, by becoming the protectors of this great new Montessori project.

All of this is necessary (vital we might say) because, although the nature of the Montessori reform of education is revolutionary in general, it is more obviously so in the case of the *erdkinder* community. Moreover, whilst Montessori education has become institutionalized to some extent, and has thereby lost some of its reforming zeal (sometimes being reduced to a mere status symbol ... an academic status symbol!), this is clearly not so in the case of the *erdkinder* community, and we need all the reforming zeal we can get!

Of course, the difference between the ideas of traditional education and those of the Montessori approach arises essentially from a differing vision of the role of the human being and the process of development. When an educational approach is so different to the standard one, a full acceptance and total commitment is required on the part of the parents. The ordinary system of education is really based on a linear view of development, as we know. The Montessori "system," embracing as it does a non-linear view of development, must seem almost *subversive* to all those who work in the ordinary system. This innovative, non-linear view of Montessori's is revealed in a particularly dramatic way in her writings about the plane of adolescence.[18]

The situation is very different when

it comes to adolescents who are disadvantaged or handicapped in any way: if the adolescent has a mental or social dysfunction, if he comes from a broken family, if he has been expelled from an ordinary school, or even if he is simply miserable at his school. Parents of adolescents like these would be more than willing to send their children to an *erdkinder* community; they might even beg to enroll their children!

Unfortunately, if these adolescents are accepted during the initial phase, it only serves to repeat the historical and erroneous labelling of Montessori as a method for the handicapped or maladjusted, a method for remedying abnormalities, be these congenital or acquired. What is needed from the beginning is an image that reflects the reality: the Montessori approach means helping all human beings in their development, human beings whose cosmic task is to continue creation by perfecting a supernature which is not only ever more complex and differentiated but also needs to co-exist in harmony with nature.

What needs to be done

- An enquiry into the level of acceptance of an *erdkinder* community on the part of present-day American society. That is to say, by the educational authorities, parents, potential staff or personnel and the potential adolescent members. (See sections 12, 8 and 9)
- Outline of a plan for setting up the boarding/residential school including the student hostel, the farm, the guesthouse, shop, etc.; and for their coordination into a single overall structure for the functioning of the *erdkinder* community. (See section 3)
- Information on the most important institutions that have been set up for adolescents (past and present), and especially on how these institutions have been organized. (See section 5)
- A plan concerning the team of experts for the *erdkinder* community: component members, their various tasks and their coordination. (See section 9)
- A "Montessori" syllabus (possibly unified/integrated) of the academic curricula adopted by the secondary schools involved in the "adolescent project" or "urban compromise." (See sections 4 and 10)
- The national programme or curriculum for the first three years of secondary school. (See section 10)
- A single comprehensive report on all the observations made by the adolescent practitioners. (See section 4)
- An outline of a Montessori "plan of studies and work" prepared and organized/systematized for immediate use in the *erdkinder* community. (See sections 3 and 10)
- Collecting all of Dr. Montessori's unpublished lectures on the secondary school and (possibly) revising, translating and publishing them in a single volume. Clearly this would have to be done in cooperation with AMI. This collection and Dr. Montessori's *From Childhood to Adolescence* would constitute the only *theory* text based directly on Montessori sources. (See section 9)

In other words, what is needed now is a single integrated plan, both for each *component* aspect of the *erdkinder* community and for the *erdkinder* community as a *whole*. Such a plan could serve as the initial and constant point of reference, so that the *erdkinder* project can, in Mario Montessori Jr.'s words, "acquire its definite form in an independent body capable of existing in its own right."

Conclusion

Given that there may be a lack or shortage of adequate resources (financial, organizational, environmental, human, etc.), given above all that the times may not yet be ripe for our society to accept a full implementation of Dr. Montessori's proposal for the reform of secondary school education (despite the fact that she outlined this plane of education in London more than fifty years ago), perhaps we should ask ourselves whether it is up to us to give life to this great idea of the *erdkinder* community, or whether it would be advisable to leave it as a utopia for future generations of Montessorians to transform into a reality.

Anyway, also with the *erdkinder*, we always have a great Montessori, a Montessori with her difficult destiny of never belonging to the present. And if, for some, she already belongs to the past educationally speaking, we are of the contrary opinion. We are of the opinion that, because of her cosmic vision and also because of her *erdkinder*, in reality Maria Montessori still belongs to our future.[19] ❖

© Camillo Grazzini and Baiba Krumins G. 1996. All rights reserved. No part of this paper may be reproduced without the advance, written permission of the authors.

NOTES

[1] Maria Montessori. *The Secret of Childhood.* Orient Longmans, Bombay-Calcutta-Madras, 1958. Part III, chapter 1 (Homo Laborans). This reference source serves the designated quotation and also all subsequent quotations until such time as a new reference source is indicated.

[2] Maria Montessori. *From Childhood to Adolescence.* Clio Press, Oxford, England. First edition 1994. Page 64.

[3] During the last decades much interesting work and research has been undertaken on the human brain, and reports of this work can be found in books, journals, magazines and newspapers. One of these reports examined development in relation to the brain's metabolic activity, synaptic connection and sleep patterns. As was only to be expected, great differences emerged between adults and children: the brains of children (from ages 3 to 11) use twice as much energy as those of adults; certain regions of the child's brain have many more synaptic connections; children get twice as much deep sleep as adults. *The change-over takes place during early adolescence* (from ages 11 to 14): the brain's metabolic activity gradually falls to the adult level; the number of synapses seems to decrease; deep sleep reaches adults patterns. *Brain research therefore seems to provide further evidence of a profound transformation during early adolescence, a significant physiological reorganization of the human brain.* Reported in the *International Herald Tribune,* June 1986.

[4] Maria Montessori. *From Childhood to Adolescence.* Schocken Books, New York. Second edition, 1976. Page 101. The second Schocken edition was revised on the basis of the first Italian edition (published in 1970). We have used both the Clio and the Schocken editions of *From Childhood to Adolescence* because the texts sometimes differ.

[5] *The Gospel According to St. Luke,* chapter 2, verses 41 to 52: Jesus in the temple with the doctors.

[6] Maria Montessori. *Education and Peace.* Clio Press, Oxford, England. First edition 1992. Pages 69-70.

[7] Nedo Fanelli. *L'ambiente come luogo per crescere*. Published in 'il quaderno montessori' (Castellanza, Varese, Italy), no. 36 - Winter 92/93.

[8] The story of Jesus in the wilderness (or in the *desert* as we should say in Italian) can be found in the Gospels according to St. Matthew, St. Mark and St. Luke. In *St. Luke's Gospel*, it is found in chapter 4, verses 1 to 13. Maria Montessori's *21st International Training Course in Education* was held in London, from August 26th, 1935 to January 18th, 1936. The ninth course in London, it was held at The Montessori Training College, Rosslyn Hill, Hampstead. As "a supplement and conclusion" to this course, a *Special Winter Holiday Course* was held from Monday the 6th to Saturday the 18th of January, 1936. As part of this special course, Dr. Montessori gave two lectures on "The Plan of Education." It was during these lectures that Montessori used those striking expressions (which refer to the environment) in order to characterize the human being during the different phases of his development.

[9] Letter from C. Grazzini to L. Weiss, Sweden, October, 1991.

[10] To cite just one example, in 1946 don Zeno Saltini converted the German concentration camp of Fossoli (located in the Italian region of Emilia-Romagna) into a village for war orphans. It was called *Nomadelfia* and became a community of youths who lived and worked according to a particular rule.

[11] The Boys' Village became the Boys' Republic, which was made up of various villages: the Industrial Village (carpentry, ceramics, mechanics, printing, shoe factory, etc.), the Sailors' Village, the Agricultural Village. In 1955 Monsignor Carroll-Abbing went on to found the Boys' Town of Rome, and both the Boys' Republic and the more recent Boys' Town exist to this day. Monsignor Carroll-Abbing himself still lives in Italy.

[12] *Progressive education*, or the new education movement, is a recent and important part of the history of education in Europe and America. In Europe, together with C. Reddie and A.S. Neill in England, H. Lietz in Germany, E. Demolins in France, O. Decroly, A. Ferriere and others, we find Maria Montessori. In the United States we find above all John Dewey (1859-1952). During the years 1896 to 1904, while he was working at the University of Chicago, Dewey founded and directed an experimental elementary school. His experiences with this school provided the source material for his book, *The School and Society* (1899). As we can see from this book, Dewey's hope was to overcome the old dualism between the world of culture and that of labour; between the humanistic education reserved for the upper classes and the technical instruction (lacking in any spiritual perspective) reserved for the training of workers. Dewey hoped to overcome this dualism by providing a *democratic* education which was valid for everyone, and which would therefore serve to bring together the interests of the different groups or classes and to decrease the gulf between them. For *progressive education*, see also: Camillo Grazzini, *The Four Planes of Development*. Published in 'The Child, the Family, the Future,' proceedings of the AMI International Study Conference, July 19-24, 1994, Washington, DC; and reprinted in 'The NAMTA Journal,' Vol. 21, No. 2 - Spring, 1996. In particular, see the section *Maria Montessori and Progressive Education*, and the related notes.

[13] Vittorio Gorresio. *Montessori o Papini per il premio Nobel?* Published in the Italian newspaper, *Corriere della sera*. Milan, June 19th, 1949.

[14] John Boyd Orr (1st Baron of Brechin Mearns), British scientist and authority on nutrition (both human and animal nutrition); his writings include *Food and the People* (1943). Clearly the relationship between peace and the satisfaction of *physical hunger* was given preeminence. Montessori always speaks of *spiritual and intellectual hunger*.

[15] Same as 9.

[16] One can only assume that Maria Montessori would not sympathize with the neo-Luddite movement, which opposes modern technology on the grounds of its increasingly dehumanizing effects. This movement, guided by it leader Kirkpatrick Sale, is currently expanding in the United States. For Montessori's point of view, it is enough to refer to *From Childhood to Adolescence* where Montessori speaks about how the adolescents must become accustomed to using machines, and gives a long list of examples. (See Clio page 79; this part has been eliminated in Schocken's second edition.) She gives at least nineteen examples (this is in 1939): "typewriters, knitting machines, weaving machines, calculators, printing presses; to photograph, to develop; projectors, microscopes, phonographs and radios, electric machines ... for telegraphy the bicycle ... also the little machines of common usage: vegetable peelers, food grinders, vacuum cleaners, washing and ironing machines, et cetera." The list could now be updated with, for example: telephone, television, dishwashers, motorbike, tape recorders, VCR, microwave ovens, all the various agricultural machines, etc., etc., and, above all, the computer with its multiple uses. And also: answering machines, fax machines, and how to use that very recent innovation, the Internet. Maria Montessori, however, also emphasizes the great imbalance that exists between technological development and human development. Thus she writes: "Man is dependent on the machine while it is he who must dominate it" (Clio, 79).

[17] Maria Montessori. *Psico-Aritmetica*. Casa Editorial Araluce, Barcelona, 1934. First Italian edition: *Psicoaritmetica*. Preface by Mario M. Montessori. Introduction, translation, revisions and annotations by Camillo Grazzini. Garzanti Editore. Milan, 1971. See especially chapters VI, IX, and XI. To this day the book has never been published in the English language.

[18] Same as 9.

[19] Twenty-five years ago, in the introduction to *Psicoaritmetica*, I wrote: "Sometimes it is alleged that Montessori is our of fashion; but the endless drama of Montessori is that her position has never had anything to do with the fashions of the times. It is said that Montessori is outdated; but Montessori's ideas do not yet belong to the present. This is so for her thinking on developmental psychology; for her vision of man, his origins and destiny (see, for example, her fascinating chapter on cosmic education), and for her psycho-didactics. A single aspect of her approach is occasionally accepted and used (and at times, abused)..."

Camillo Grazzini is an AMI elementary trainer and co-director of training at the International Centre for Montessori Studies Foundation in Bergamo, Italy. He has dedicated more than forty-five years to the Montessori movement, and for many of those years he worked under the direct guidance of Mario M. Montessori. An AMI examiner for both primary and elementary, Mr. Grazzini is currently a member of the AMI Pedagogical Committee, Sponsoring Committee, Material Committee, and the AMI Board of Directors.

My Tribute to Mario Montessori

Camillo Grazzini

Here and now I wish to give my own personal testimony to the importance and merit of my "maestro," Mario Montesano Montessori, both as a man and as an outstanding exponent of Montessori education and scholarship.

During thirty years of activity after the death of his mother, Mario Montessori accomplished a great work, and this work took three main, interconnected, forms.

Firstly, as the General Director of the Association Montessori Internationale (and it had been Dr. Montessori's express wish that he become General Director of AMI), Mario Montessori set up centers for training Montessori teachers in all different parts of the world.

Secondly, by means of numerous AMI study conferences and the advanced course held in London, Mario Montessori shaped and regularized the Montessori approach for elementary school, both from the point of view of psychology and of methodology, so as to give life to *cosmic education* for children from six to twelve. Indeed, cosmic education as we know it today is actually the result of a great collaboration between Mario Montessori and his mother. His contribution, in other words, was fundamental and led to the further development of Montessori pedagogy for the elementary child.

Thirdly, Mario Montessori developed innovative ideas for advanced work, and some of these were, if you will forgive the play on words, happily materialized in the form of new materials.

Thus, in this year's first issue of *AMI Communications*, Renilde Montessori gives the "acknowledgement of the invaluable contribution he made to the development of the Montessori materials and methodology, in uninterrupted dialogue with Maria Montessori" as one of three good reasons for celebrating Mario Montessori.

Anyway, in all areas of his work, Mario Montessori was a Montessorian who was both creative and independent, whilst always remaining faithful to the *Dottoressa*. Just like Maria Montessori before him, Mario Montessori was uncompromising over the principles of the method. He always safeguarded the Montessori principles, which were to remain as such in their entirety, originality and essentiality, even if it meant having to endure defection or desertion from the Montessori Movement, something that occurred in this country, for example, during the early sixties.

I always remember when I first met Mario Montessori. It was in the summer of 1954, in Perugia, where I was frequenting the Montessori course directed by Maria Antonietta Paolini, Maria Montessori's pupil, collaborator and friend.

There are two great differences between our present courses and those of 45 or so years ago. The first is that the courses at that time were "general" Montessori courses; that is, they were not limited to a specific age range (*Casa dei Bambini* for example) as opposed to elementary. The second great difference is that, back then, during practice with the materials, the students were allowed to smoke, each at his or her own table. Thus it happened that, whilst Mario Montessori was going around the students' tables, he stationed himself with his back to my table just where my lighted cigarette was protruding beyond the edge and burned the elegant beige linen shirt he was wearing over his trousers! How did he react? That is my secret.

Another personal recollection … At one of the study conferences I had the ungrateful task of collecting money from the participants for the wine consumed at mealtimes. Table after table, I encountered the greatest difficulty in obtaining the required sums. People, or at any rate Montessorians, are always the same; they never have the right money for paying up! So I looked at the *boss*, as we were wont to call Mario, and he signalled to me not to insist; he would pay for everyone.

With the same generosity he would send gifts of flowers, always many and almost always red: another way of showing his sympathy for, and solidarity with, those who worked together with him to spread Montessori's ideas and to put them into practice in a concrete way.

Mario Montessori's work on the advanced course given together with Maria Montessori in Kodaikanal, India (1943/44), and the work at the advanced seminar in Perugia, Italy (1956), constituted the framework of the advanced course given in London (1957/58). Subsequently, AMI structured the training courses to correspond to the planes and sub-planes of development as identified by Dr. Montessori (0-3, 3-6, 6-12) and Mario Montessori founded the Bergamo Centre, the first AMI center to hold advanced Montessori courses on a permanent basis. It was 1961 when Mario Montessori, in cooperation with the municipality of Bergamo, set up the *Centro Internazionale Studi Montessoriani* and, shortly before his death in 1982, he witnessed its legal transformation into a foundation.

Mario Montessori wanted this center to function not only as an institution for the training of Montessori teachers for elementary school but also as a center of studies and documentation: a center for "the study and development … of Montessori pedagogy … for the research and development of Montessori material and the compilation of texts…" as we can read in the first article of C.I.S.M.'s statute, a statute that was drafted by Mario Montessori in the person of AMI's legal adviser for Italy.

Especially during the first fifteen years of the centre's existence, Mario Montessori often stayed for lengthy periods in Bergamo so that he could share his knowledge and those unpublished writings of Maria Montessori's that are relevant to cosmic education, the fixed parameter and unfailing answer for meeting the needs of the human being during the second plane of development. Thus Mario Montessori was often present at the lectures given by his assistants and collaborators in the various subject areas, and anyone can imagine their embarrasment in the presence of this illustrious visitor. Actually, Mario always looked at you with sympathy whilst he observed attentively and with vigilant interest whatever you were presenting or doing. He never intervened during the lecture to correct any errors or inaccuracies you might have committed or uttered. He did that later, in private and in an unfailingly amiable, generous, very humane and reassuring manner. Mario was a man who could be very encouraging and who could help you grow in your understanding of the method.

Sometimes, without warning, as though driven by some overwhelming urge to demonstrate, for example, a mathematical problem that he had been maturing, Mario himself would suddenly give presentations to the students. He would work without any notes whatsoever, sometimes without having available all the material he needed. He would go back over what he had already done, adding in some part missing previously or taking out something that had been present before, repeating the presentation but in a different way … And then something interesting could be observed: the students would stop taking notes whilst Mario's assistants would write continuously, noting down everything in detail, just as it came.

The assistants considered such a presentation an unrepeatable and invaluable gift. We would then take care of listing precisely all the necessary material, of ordering appropriately all the steps of the presentation. In other words, we would take care of transforming that brilliant moment into the usual page of an album, into a piece of paper to add to all those others resembling the pages of a cook book with 1-2-3, etc. in Roman and Arabic numerals, with A-B-C, etc. in letters both capital and small, and with all their possible and insane combinations, so dear to the modern heart, apparently for reasons of easy reference but perhaps for an underlying need of absolute certainty and structure.

Like early human beings, I am a hunter and gatherer, but what I hunt for and what I gather has to do with my work in Montessori. Thus, for example, over the years I have gathered, or perhaps collected would be a better word, the texts of courses given by the *Dottoressa* in different parts of the world during different periods of her life. And so it is that, reading through her lectures and presentations, one can see that these are never exactly the same. Indeed, nothing could be further from the sort of thing we find in the albums prepared by the students of our courses.

Our albums with their various presentations are becoming, as I said, more and more like a cook book, but the students and even the lecturers who are less prepared from the cultural and psychological points of view, demand this very approach, so ridiculously, meticulously, mechanically precise. This kind of approach is exactly the opposite of that used by Maria and Mario Montessori who, as talented and creative individuals, were as far as could be from any artificial or mechanical structure.

From 1961, when the Montessori Centre of Bergamo was founded, I had the opportunity and good fortune to work with Mario Montessori on a regular basis. Thanks to his generosity, for a good twenty years I was able to share and experience together with him the passionate beginning, the critical development, the happy finalization, and the precise documentation of innumerable researches on materials and methodology for the *Casa dei Bambini* through to secondary school, but above all for elementary school. The research connected with the ages 6 to 12 was mostly concerned with arithmetic, geometry, algebra, new maths, chemistry, physics and biology, and each new work, each new development, was integrated within the plan of cosmic education. In all of this time and with all of this shared work, I came to appreciate ever more the strength of Mario Montessori's humanity, intelligence, knowledge and originality and, at the same time, his deep commitment to the real value of our work and to Dr. Montessori's vision.

In the same *AMI Communications* cited earlier, I read an interesting article by Professor P. Krishna. In his article, *Right Education for the 21st Century*, he speaks about Dr. Montessori's vision of education and he says, "A school is not a Montessori school just because it adopts the use of those techniques and materials. The technique does not create the vision; it is the vision that creates the technique." The problem raised by Krishna is highly relevant when it comes to the further development of the Montessori approach, be this with reference to materials or methodology in general, and it is sad to see what some adults or teachers present under the name of Montessori: the endless multiplication of materials and activities being a case in point. But Mario Montessori was ***always*** in "uninterrupted dialogue" with Maria Montessori, because it is my conviction that this was so even during the thirty years following the death of his mother. The dialogue was perhaps less direct, it was through what he had internalized and with all the papers she had left, but it was ***always*** there. This dialogue enabled Mario Montessori, and also those who worked under his guidance and supervision, to develop materials and methodology in harmony with that vision of which Krishna speaks so eloquently.

Many materials and activities prepared by Mario Montessori were presented during the long history of the advanced Montessori courses held by the Bergamo Centre, whose director of studies after all was none other than Mario himself. During each course, one or two specific areas were selected for special attention, and the students were presented with some more advanced aspects related to those areas. Certainly these "aspects" are not part of the usual or the "institutionalized," so to speak, programme of the advanced courses held by AMI centres, but were like sparse and brilliant pearls which demonstrate Mario Montessori's ingenious and original contribution, the vitality and dynamism of the method in its development, and how new research and perspectives fit quite naturally within the overall design of the Montessori approach. Thus, also with the research and development undertaken by Mario, it is possible to identify those principles that traverse and coordinate the various materials within a single, unified whole.

Before giving a few specific examples or illustrations of those "pearls," I wish to point out some important contributions of a vaster kind. Mario Montessori is the author of *Botany for Children*, a study of the morphology of flowering plants and one which is extraordinarily rich in content and detail. Materialized as, though not limited to, the botany classified nomenclature, this contribution is found to this day on our courses and in our schools. Mario Montessori also worked on *Chemistry for Children* to develop further Dr. Montessori's contribution, as we find it in her book, *From Childhood to Adolescence*. Mario Montessori also worked on *Algebra for Children*, where we find (as we would expect) an ingenious materialization of the concepts involved. This work starts with the substitution of letters for numbers and with signed numbers; it continues with linear equations where there is one unknown, then pairs of linear equations, and goes on to consider quadratic equations with one unknown. It concludes with a brief excursus on trigonometry.

Thus, *Botany, Chemistry and Algebra for Children* are three important general contributions that Mario Montessori gave to the Montessori methodology, and they span the years from *Casa dei Bambini* through to secondary school.

Here are some of those "pearls," or rather some hints and indications.

An example involving chemistry

A coordinated set of materials for the "alphabet of the universe" was prepared. So here we find the Montessori solid and plane/flat sensorial representations of the atoms of the main chemical elements, together with their chemical valences. [Fig. 1] Using this material, we represent the structural formulae (with bonds) of the various chemical substances used in experiments for the cosmic fable of *God Who Has No Hands*, and geography in general, as well as those for botany or plant physiology.

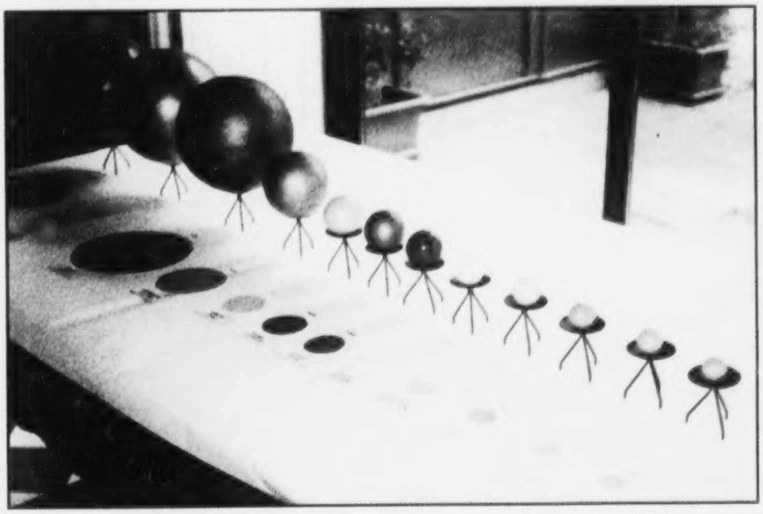


Figure 1. Montessori representations of chemical elements: the atoms. Perugia 1956

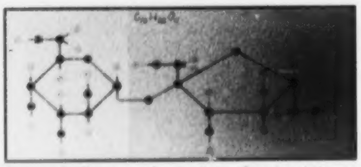


Figure 2. The transformation of sugar into carbon: sucrose. Perugia 1956

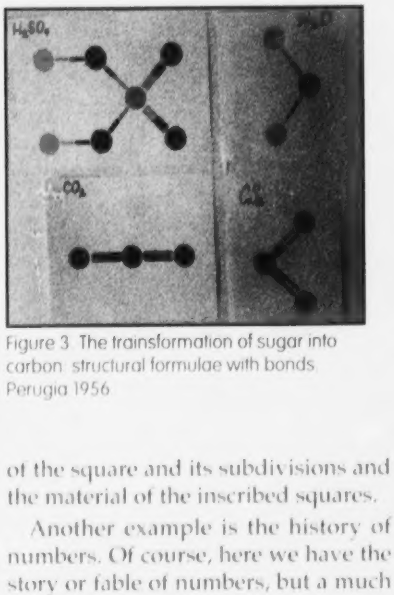


Figure 3. The trainsformation of sugar into carbon: structural formulae with bonds. Perugia 1956

So, for example, the "sugar that changes into coal" is an experiment that shows a particular chemical reaction, that of carbonization, which in this particular case is due to the dehydrating action of the acid employed. The related charts show, in vivid colors (because the atoms of each element have their own particular color as well as their own particular size) the initial formulae: those for sugar and for sulfuric acid, and the resulting formulae: those for water, carbon dioxide and carbon disulfide. The cyclic form of the structural formula for sucrose is spectacular. It is a sequence of two polygonal shapes which are joined together: hexagonal for glucose and pentagonal for fructose. [Fig. 2 & 3]

Examples involving arithmetic

One example for arithmetic is the work with rational and irrational numbers using the insets from the material of the square and its subdivisions and the material of the inscribed squares.

Another example is the history of numbers. Of course, here we have the story or fable of numbers, but a much deeper and more detailed exploration can be done of the different systems of numeration used by civilizations of the past. The Bergamo Centre has the material for exploring these systems: the Egyptian hieroglyphic system, Babylonian, Hebrew, the two Greek systems of numeration, Mayan and Aztec. Explorations like these go far beyond arithmetic or the history of numbers because they give us an insight into the life of these civilizations, and because the history of numbers is also intrinsically related to the history of written language.

An example involving the part of new math that deals with non-decimal systems of numeration

In this area Mario Montessori developed material consisting of the geometric representations of the hierarchies for system base 2 and system base 3. The material comes in the usual hierarchical colors and spans the hierarchies from power zero to the sixth power. In other words, this material is analogous to the wooden hierarchical material for the decimal system.

Some examples involving geometry

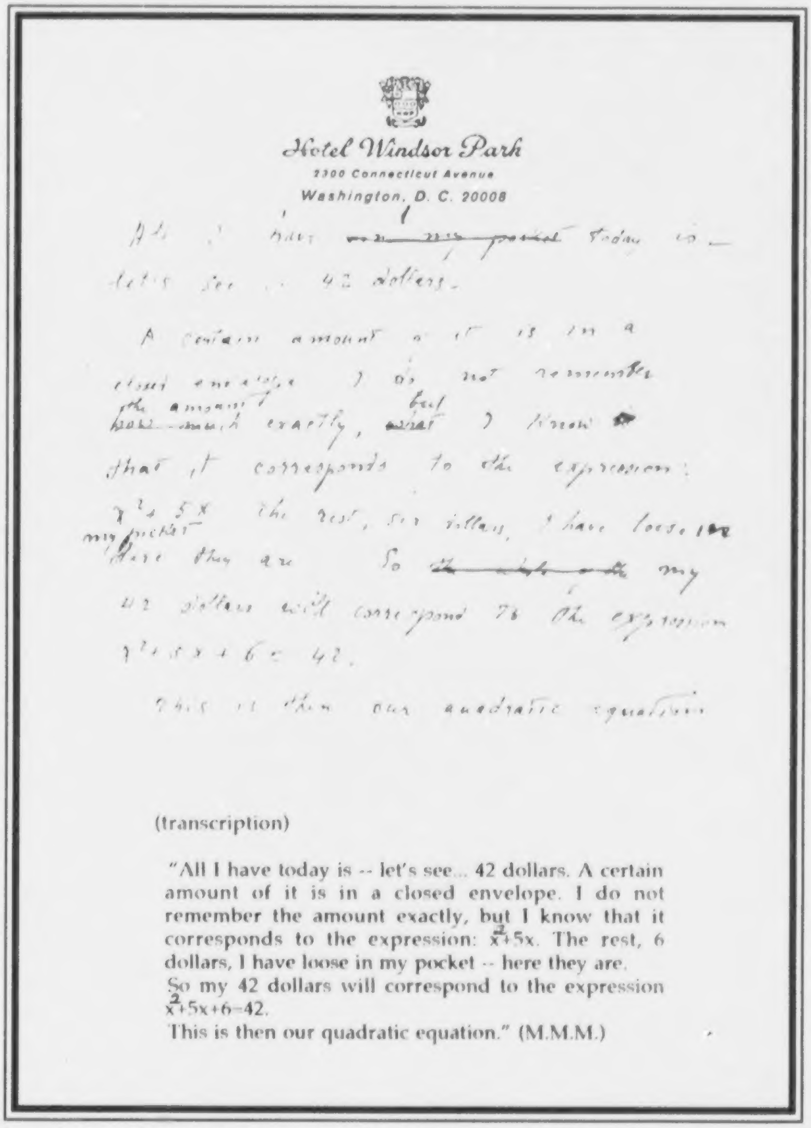
These examples derive ultimately from manuscripts by Anna Maria Maccheroni, Dr. Montessori's famous pupil and collaborator. Mario worked on the basis of this earlier contribution to show his assistants an interesting exploration of the Platonic solids. Each of these five regular polyhedra is made up of a certain number of pyramids, as many as the number of faces limiting the solid, and this can then lead into finding the volume of each of these special solids. The exploration of the Platonic solids then leads into the exploration of the sphere: that is, by analogy with the regular polyhedra, how can we find the volume of the sphere?

An example involving algebra: quadratic equations with one unknown [Fig. 4]

Mario started with the square of a binomial in order to go on to build a quadratic equation. This procedure gives an equation in the form, for example: $x^2+12x+36=64$, and this enables us to find the positive root, +2. Then, since 64-36=28, we come on to work with the more general and usual form: $x^2+12x=28$ from which it will be easy to pass to the classic: $x^2+12x-28=0$.

With the second form of the equation, we first work by simply trying out different solutions and then by factoring, so as to reach not only the positive root but also the negative root, -14. [Fig. 5]

The material Mario Montessori used for working with equations like these was the pegboard and pegs, so the point here was not at all new material, but new work based on familiar work and familiar material.



Hotel Windsor Park
2300 Connecticut Avenue
Washington, D. C. 20008

All I have ~~in my pocket~~ today is —
let's see .. 42 dollars.

A certain amount of it is in a
closed envelope. I do not remember
the amount ~~how much~~ exactly, but ~~what~~ I know
that it corresponds to the expression:
x^2+5x the rest, six dollars, I have loose in my pocket
here they are. So ~~[illegible]~~ my
42 dollars will correspond to the expression
$x^2+5x+6=42$.

This is then our quadratic equation

(transcription)

"All I have today is -- let's see... 42 dollars. A certain amount of it is in a closed envelope. I do not remember the amount exactly, but I know that it corresponds to the expression: x^2+5x. The rest, 6 dollars, I have loose in my pocket -- here they are.
So my 42 dollars will correspond to the expression $x^2+5x+6=42$.
This is then our quadratic equation." (M.M.M.)

Figure 4. Mario Montessori's manuscript. AMI Study Conference, New York 1966

The interesting thing is that with Mario's very first form of the equation, there is a single, unique geometric representation; whereas with the second form there are 13 possible geometric representations just for the positive root. [Fig. 6]

Even these few examples are enough to illustrate how Mario Montessori's contribution to the Montessori work came to constitute an integral and integrated corpus of methodology. He regarded mathematics in the manner Dr. Montessori describes in her book, *Education for a New World*: "We consider mathematics from three points of view: arithmetic, algebra, geometry. Under the guidance of our experience with children, we have given these three together, and at an age almost incredibly early. Uniting the three has been found to be a great help and very effective; it is as if, instead of balancing the subject on a precarious pole, we placed it on three strong feet, which join together to give great stability."

Mario Montessori often adopted the indirect approach; putting it in Montessori terms, he often worked "at the periphery of the personality." And this

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

approach he applied also to the ordinary events and situations of everyday life, as I myself had occasion to experience. During one of my many visits to his home in Baarn (near Amsterdam), there was one particular morning when I was called to work with him and had the audacity to present myself unshaven. I did this knowing perfectly well that he considered such lack of personal care most unpleasant. Without saying a word, he conducted me to his car and drove me to a nearby village. I discovered that we had arrived at the headquarters of Philips, where he invited me to choose an electric razor. I still have it. I have never used it, but then again I would never get rid of it. And every time I happen to see it, I remember his expression: friendly and cordial despite my misdemeanor.

When I worked with him, whether in Bergamo or in Holland, Mario Montessori never had anything written with him. He would talk, and I took note of everything he said. Then I would rewrite the notes, adding annotations and so on. Mario would do a first revision and return them to me for rewriting once again; and I would send them back for his final revision. This work, which concerned every aspect of the method, both theoretical and methodological, went on for twenty years. I still remember with regret how I did not take up his invitation to visit him in January 1982, but postponed the visit to a later date. It would have been the last visit in a long series. He wanted to work on "fundamental human needs" and on "interdependency in human society." But the following February Mario Montessori died and a special Montessori era came to a close.

Now we all belong to a new era but it is an era which has been bequeathed to us by Mario Montessori, the man whom we are all celebrating with this 1998 National Conference. ❖

For bio see page 18.

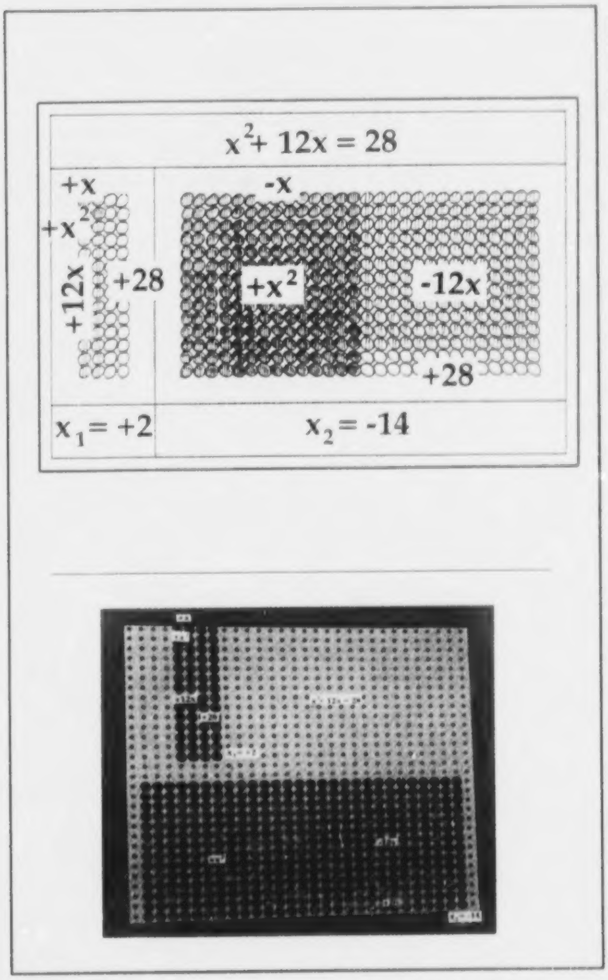
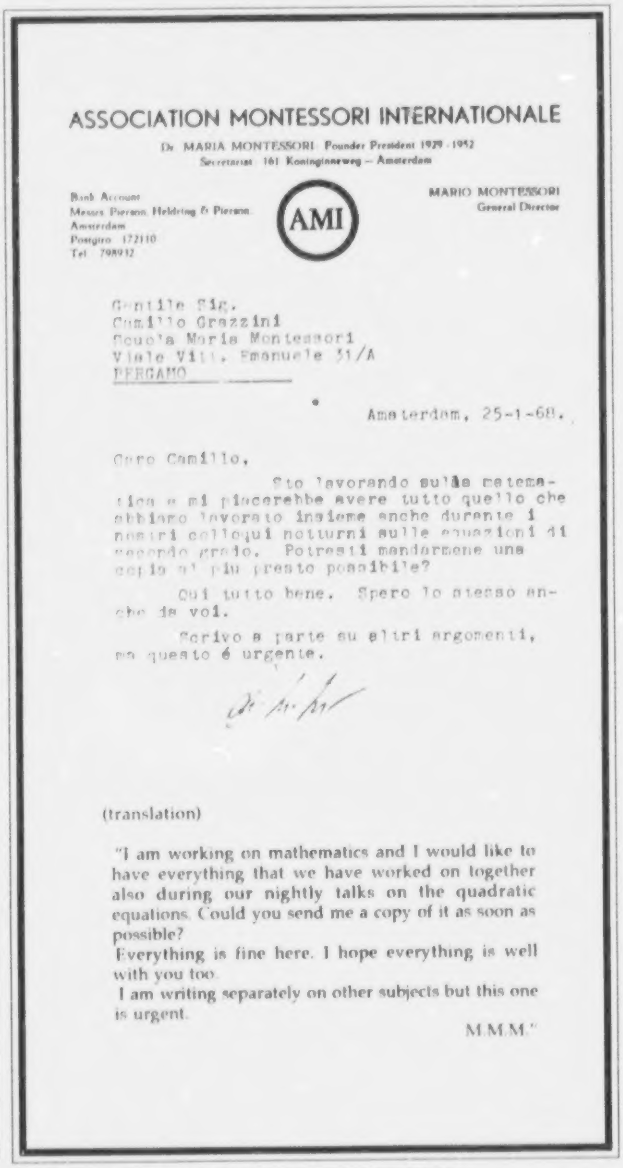


Figure 5a & b. A quadratic equation: its geometrical representation. Bergamo 1965



ASSOCIATION MONTESSORI INTERNATIONALE

Dr. MARIA MONTESSORI Founder President 1929 - 1952
Secretariat: 161 Koninginneweg – Amsterdam

Bank Account
Messrs. Pierson, Heldring & Pierson
Amsterdam
Postgiro 172110
Tel. 798932

AMI

MARIO MONTESSORI
General Director

Gentile Sig.
Camillo Grazzini
Scuola Maria Montessori
Viale Vitt. Emanuele 31/A
BERGAMO

Amsterdam, 25-1-68.

Caro Camillo,

Sto lavorando sulla matematica e mi piacerebbe avere tutto quello che abbiamo lavorato insieme anche durante i nostri colloqui notturni sulle equazioni di secondo grado. Potresti mandarmene una copia al piu presto possibile?

Qui tutto bene. Spero lo stesso anche da voi.

Scrivo a parte su altri argomenti, ma questo é urgente.

(translation)

"I am working on mathematics and I would like to have everything that we have worked on together also during our nightly talks on the quadratic equations. Could you send me a copy of it as soon as possible?
Everything is fine here. I hope everything is well with you too.
I am writing separately on other subjects but this one is urgent.

M.M.M."

Figure 6. Mario Montessori's letter. Amsterdam 1968

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

The Natural Unfolding of Grace and Courtesy in Children Under Three Years

Judi Orion

When I looked at the promotional material for this conference, I was struck by the quote by Renilde Montessori and decided to use this quote as the structure for this presentation. The quote is as follows:

"Grace comes from *gratus*, a Latin term for beloved. When speaking of the Montessori prepared environment, its tangible and intangible characteristics are frequently discussed. Essential among the latter is the unconditional acceptance of every child that its inherent grace may flourish in the knowledge that it is loved wisely and well. The spirit of this love is to be generous, fastidious, devoid of sentimentality, creating a growthsome climate of benevolence within austere, non-intrusive parameters."

If we examine this quote, in its various parts, we can discover the roots for allowing for the unfolding of grace in children under three years of age. Let's begin with "…the unconditional acceptance of every child so that its inherent grace may flourish…" We speak in the 0-3 training of the effects of acceptance versus rejection of a child on its (the child's) personality development. We believe that it is every child's birthright to be 100% unconditionally accepted by those who love and care for it, beginning with its parents, extended family members and extending to every teacher or significant adult that the child comes in contact with. The reality is that very few children experience 100% acceptance from their own parents, let alone the rest of the world of adults around them. What are some of the ways we reject children? The overt ones are very obvious – abortion, adoption, abuse – in all its many manifestations. But what about those more subtle forms of rejection. What effect do they have on a young child? What about perfectionism – that menace that says to a child, "Let me fix this one part of you and then you will be perfect and I can accept you 100%. You will then fit my criteria for being ok." Children with perfectionistic parents can develop into children who are very insecure, uncertain, with feelings of being "not quite good enough." What about perfectionistic teachers? What effect do they have on the development of the young child? Do the children in these teachers' classes develop strong self-esteem and self-confidence, or are they unsure of their abilities? What has this to do with grace and courtesy?

How can anyone feel comfortable with expressing him or herself in a social situation, of showing care and concern for his or her fellow human beings, if he or she is convinced something is wrong with himself? How can a child's inherent grace unfold if he or she is wracked with insecurities, uncertainties?

How do we, as teachers, unconditionally accept each and every child in our group? First, we must unconditionally accept ourselves – the good, the bad and the ugly – all our imperfections as well as our good qualities.

When we can accept the imperfections in ourselves, we can view others not as a reflection of ourselves but as unique, perfect human beings.

Does this mean that we must unconditionally accept all behaviors? Absolutely not! And many of us have trouble knowing how, when, where to set limits on the behaviors of tiny children.

What kinds of limits must be set on tiny children? Any behavior that is rude, disruptive, harmful to others or to the environment. Very few, but consistent rules need to be established. "I will not allow you to bite people; I will not allow you to throw materials; I will not allow you to harm yourself nor your peers."

We must remember that tiny children are at the mercy of their *hormes* – that driving force that pushes them from within to construct themselves as the human being they have the potential to become. Most tiny children do not, initially, do things to upset adults; they do things because they are being urged from within to construct themselves. If there are too many obstacles in their path of development, they can only become deviated in their behaviors. I cannot emphasize enough that tiny children do not do things intentionally to irritate us; they are simply being pushed by their *horme* to construct themselves.

Let's continue to examine the quote: "…may flourish in the knowledge that it is loved wisely and well…" How reassuring it must be to a tiny child to know that one, it is loved and two, it is loved wisely and well. If we define "love" as to "wish the best for another," then every child in our environment deserves nothing less than to be loved by us. If we cannot love them, in this sense, then we cannot serve them. If we can love only parts of them, or love them only on certain days, then we cannot serve them in the best interest of their development.

To "love wisely and well" to me means that we must cater to the developmental needs of the children, not to our need to be loved by them. We need to be able to set limits for them. They need to be reassured that when they lose control of themselves we are willing to step in and set the necessary limits, so they can, once again, learn to control themselves. Many, many adults are afraid to set limits on children's behavior because of their fear that children won't like them. My experience tells me that children respond to limits with a sigh of relief (after an initial reaction of course). "How reassuring to know that when I lose control of myself someone is able to step in and help me."

To continue, "…the spirit of this love is to be generous, fastidious, devoid of sentimentality…"

Generous - given any and every time a child needs it, not given when we need to give it.

Fastidious - meaning "showing or demanding excessive delicacy or care;" "reflecting a meticulous, sensitive or demanding attitude." We must become, if we are not already, fastidious in our understanding of the love for a child; never mush, never gushing.

Devoid of sentimentality - We must always hold "love" (unselfish loyal and benevolent concern for the good of another) in the forefront of our thoughts for the children. Always to be concerned about their good – their positive self-construction.

To be able to do this requires that our own personal needs for affection are met outside the classroom. This means we must create a life outside our work. Do we create other avenues for having our own needs met? If not, we run the risk of becoming needy of the children's affections – and this can become an obstacle to their development.

"…a growthsome climate of benevolence within austere non-intrusive parameters…" We must always bear in mind Montessori's warning to us: "every useless aid becomes an obstacle."

Our environments must be simple and simply beautiful. Our souls, our spirits must become uncluttered with the trivia of everyday life and become focused on the miracle of life unfolding before us.

If we remember the phenomenal power of the *absorbent mind* and the awesome responsibility that the knowledge of this power brings with it, we must continually ask ourselves the following questions:

❖ "What possibility was there today for each and every child to absorb something positive for their self-construction?"

❖ "Was I 100% present to every child today?"

❖ "Was the environment beautifully prepared in every aspect so each child had the best possible materials to absorb and thereby construct himself?"

❖ "Did I feel like I had no control of the children and then become a) angry, or b) escape them mentally by planning my evening?"

If we do believe in the power of the *absorbent mind*, then we are compelled to prepare ourselves and prepare our environment.

The next step is often much harder: to remove ourselves as an obstacle to the child's growth. To allow each child to use the environment, the materials as they need to use them (within limits, of course). Perhaps what they choose to do with it is not what we had in mind. Do we have the humility to step back and observe; to discover what a child ***needs***, not what we think they should do.

Do we understand, and accept, the force of the *horme*, that incredible, powerful force within each child, pushing her to take what she needs and use it to construct herself?

Do we understand, and accept, that when that *horme* is blocked, is stifled, is superimposed on by an adult's will, that we are creating in this child a deflection from her normal path of development – what Maria Montessori called a psychic deviation?

I believe that most of the world thinks that the deviated, unfocused, willful, tantrum-ridden behavior of toddlers is normal. Certainly the world laughs at and supports the "terrible twos" reputation. We know the two-year-old to be in a crisis of self-affirmation, not necessarily an opposition crisis.

Are we contributing to a toddler's deviated behavior or are we helping him cure any deviations he may have accumulated? We know that to cure deviations a child must work; not watch an adult work, but do his own work.

To understand the tiny child, to see the sometimes mixed behavioral messages little children send, we must look to their essence. We must understand Montessori's levels of obedience, and accept that these children are in the first level of obedience: "they will ***always*** obey the request of another if that request happens to coincide with what they want/need to do anyway."

But excusing a child's inappropriate behavior by saying "Oh well, after all, they're in the first level of obedience" means one is not willing to set limits on these behaviors.

How do we set limits and allow these children to nourish their essence?

By giving choices: not "what would you like to do this morning?" but, "would you like to bake the bread or feed the fish?" Limited choices, but choices that will be of interest to that child will help that child feel that we recognize and accept that he is an independent, capable human being. How often do we find ourselves saying, "Choose some work." If a child could choose some work, he would already have done so.

We know from our Montessori training that the cure for deviations is practical life; that the foundation for concentration, sequencing, socialization, language and coordinated movement is practical life; that children have absorbed many ideas about practical life from their homes. Then why, when toddlers come to an Infant Community, do we offer them shelf after shelf of manipulative materials. These materials, while necessary in a limited way, do not allow the child to construct himself as a human being. Practical life activities do that.

If we acknowledge that these children have the ability to work, to engage themselves in baking bread, setting the table, feeding the fish, and we make it possible by our choice of materials for them to work independently, then we gradually see these children become gracious and courteous. We see them coordinate their movements so they can function in a social group within limited space without infringing on the rights of others. We see their true essences unfold and we enjoy living together in harmony.

I draw your attention back to the

quote by Renilde. It bears re-reading from time to time. Have we created an environment of unconditional acceptance within a simple and simply beautiful space where children are given the guidance and limits to construct themselves? When we have done this, we make it possible for each child to reveal his or her true essence – a realized human being. ❖

Judi Orion is Director of Training at the Assistants to Infancy course in Denver, and has lectured extensively in the states and abroad about the child under three. Judi trained with Dr. Silvana Montanaro at the 0-3 level. In addition, she is a trainer at the 3-6 level, and an AMI examiner and consultant at the 0-3 and 3-6 levels.

Grace and Courtesy for the Primary Child: Theoretical Foundations

Janet McDonell

I would like to begin with a story about my oldest daughter. Several years ago, at the age of 5, she had her first birthday party. All the girls (there were 5 or 6) arrived at once, and they behaved in typical 5 year old girl fashion: they came in and formed a tight little group, eyes wide, all smiling in a clueless sort of way; a few were softly squealing ... except one, who stood aside. She was our neighbor and didn't know the rest of the girls, who were from my daughter's school. As I noticed her, looking a bit forlorn, a sudden, hard reality struck me; I had not prepared my own daughter for this social situation. Her first experience of hosting a party and I (a Montessori mother and trainer!) had failed to anticipate what should have been the obvious. In my flurry of baking scones, tracking down Devonshire cream, making an ice cream cake and preparing craft activities, I had forgotten about the most important part of a party: the comfort of the guests. I had not talked to Madeline about hosting a party. However, it was soon clear that *someone* had prepared my daughter for such courtesies. I rushed over to remind my daughter that our neighbor didn't know her other friends. I was about to prompt her when she immediately took over and formally presented each girl to Lindsey, complete with hand gestures, in typical Montessori form. I silently blessed her Montessori teacher. I watched with delight as 5 girls welcomed a 6th into their company with open arms.

I tell you this story because it says so much about the primary-aged child and grace and courtesy. The spontaneous introductions that my daughter made are a typical example of a young child's point of arrival in gracious living. Many factors contributed to this moment. Some of these are: inner drives, psychological readiness, social opportunities and indirect preparations. I want to take a closer look at each of these factors and their roles in assisting the child in developing social graces.

Definition of Terms

What do we mean by grace and courtesy? In a word, harmony. Grace is the harmony between mind and body. An example of highly developed grace would be a solo ballet performance. For a young child – just as beautiful to us as a dance – grace is the ability to walk around a rug while carrying a tray. Courtesy is the harmony between oneself and others. This may or may not be a direct social interaction. Courtesy is walking around two people who are conversing (instead of between), or courtesy might be expressed by offering refreshment to another. Such harmony is achieved through etiquette: the forms, manners and rituals that a society has established as acceptable and meaningful.

How do manners achieve social harmony? Quite simply, they aid communication. Certain words and gestures carry expansive and particular meanings in a given society. Certain behaviors immediately announce to others: "I have your consideration in mind. I wish you good will." During the Middle Ages, a person extended both hands outwards when encountering another. This meant: "I do not have a weapon in hand. I come in peace. You can let down your defenses." Today's handshake, the descendant of this medieval gesture, carries a different meaning, one that reflects modern life. Shaking another's hand now has nothing to do with weapons. Rather, it is a simple and somewhat formal greeting that says, "Hello, I offer you my respect." Though our customs change over the centuries and differ geographically, the purpose of manners remains the same. *They signify to others that we take them, their wants and needs, into consideration.* Manners allow a society to form and to evolve because its individual members acknowledge that the welfare of the group works in conjunction with the good of the individual. E.M. Standing, among others, has said that grace and courtesy lubricates social life. Isn't that a nice image? Lubrication removes unwanted friction and lets the parts of the whole work together in closest proximity. Appropriate manners will ease our relationships with other people. When social life is in harmony, the individual can relax and be herself. Relaxed persons are unguarded and more inclined to authenticity of expression. For a child, social harmony assists in maintaining a strong sense of self. In such a milieu, one can more easily satisfy one's own needs. We often think of a well-mannered person as one who puts another's comforts and needs above their own. Montessori had a different view: manners allow an individual to consider their own needs along with the needs of others.

Manners and customs are created and perpetuated by a given society. The impulse to establish manners is universal. Every group of people has them. Grace and courtesy are natural expressions of a community. The resulting behaviors, however, cannot be called "natural." Our ways of interacting have little to do with nature or logic. A young child, then (or a person from outside the culture), needs to be initiated into the customs of society. Gracious manners must be taught. If we can pass on the grace and courtesies of our culture to the young child, we give to her the power to create harmony.

In seeking to attain this goal, it is necessary to examine the developmental characteristics of the child from 3-6 as they relate to the psychological disposition to be gracious and courteous.

Psychological and Intellectual Characteristics

One of the young child's most striking characteristics is his self-centeredness. This is necessary, because he is at the stage where he is forming his personality. However, his self-absorption is not total. The young child possesses inner urges that propel him towards his environment and those around him. Maria Montessori identified the human tendency of communication that is present from birth. All humans have a need for self-expression, a need to be understood and to understand others.

Montessori also recognized that the young child experiences a sensitive period, in which he is immensely attracted to observing and practicing the social behaviors in his environment. However, the child is not yet fully social in the first plane of development, but rather in an embryonic stage for social development. During this time, the child acquires social attributes – such as particular courtesies or an awareness of others – in a somewhat isolated fashion. These attributes will not function together as a whole until all are fully developed. The birth of the social being occurs in the second plane, Montessori tells us. It is not until this time that the child is able to empathize, to imagine how another feels, to be conscious of his effect on another's emotions. The first plane child is interested in the appropriate way to *act* in a given social situation, is sometimes able to *respond* with the appropriate behavior and often *achieves* successful results. His understanding of the psychological intricacies of the situation, though, is limited.

My daughter's introductions of her friends resulted in all her friends feeling comfortable and companionable, although I doubt that that was her goal. She wasn't looking that far ahead or thinking that deeply. She made the introductions because she had been made aware that this is appropriate behavior when people haven't met, not because she was sensitive to the distraught feelings of the newest member of the group. Grace and courtesy gives the child the possibility of responding to situations which could be problematic, even though she may not perceive or understand the difficulty.

Another sensitive period that the young child experiences is for the refinement of movement. This obviously has special relevance for the development of physical grace, and also touches upon social grace. Think of the refinement of movement necessary for serving a cup of tea to another person … anticipating when and how the recipient will take possession of the cup and saucer (and think of the control of error!).

How does a young child learn? Intellectually, she is a sensorial explorer. She learns by doing: touching, listening, watching, smelling, tasting. She has not yet developed a logical and imaginative mind that would diminish the depth and purity of sensorial experience. We make use of this style of learning when introducing grace and courtesies to young children. We present just enough so that they can sensorially explore the courtesy through play acting with their peers. (I wonder what it feels like to invite a visitor into our classroom?) A child can try it out and practice the words and gestures until they become part of who she is. When they are a part of her, the child is able to summon the behavior at the appropriate social moment.

Perhaps the most significant developmental influence on learning is the absorbent nature of the child's mind. Through her absorbent mind, the child consumes all aspects of her environment without will on her part, or much consciousness. The impressions she takes in are strong. They will become a part of who she is. The absorbent mind allows the child to incarnate her environment.

The process of what Dr. Montessori called "adaptation" is possible because of the absorbent mind. In the first six years of his life, the child slowly evolves into a person of his time, place and culture. A significant part of one's culture are the ways in which people interact with each other. The child will establish a life-long emotional tie to these customs of his culture. They will become an integral part of his self-identity.

These are the major inner guides then – the absorbent mind, human tendencies and sensitive periods – along with the psychological characteristics of the first plane child, which we will consider when we plan our role in assisting the social development of the child, in helping her acquire grace and courtesy. These developmental influences have a certain intensity present only in the young child. Their fleeting nature points to the urgency of our response. We can offer the child the food that truly satisfies her hunger. At this point in her life, she hungers to become and to belong. The subject of grace and courtesy is most closely related to the subject of belonging, but this process cannot occur in its fullness without a strong sense of identity. The two processes, becoming and belonging, coexist and nourish each other throughout childhood and beyond.

For the young child, gaining consciousness of herself and who she is in relation to those around her will give her the impetus to make contact with others. If she also possesses some knowledge of the customs of social interchange, she will experience satisfaction and gain self-confidence in her social relations.

We see then that the drive to communicate and the psychological characteristics of the young child combine to render her ready for the indirect preparations for gracious living that we offer her in the prepared environment.

The Prepared Environment

Let's look at the elements of the prepared environment that indirectly give the child the opportunity to encounter and practice grace and courtesy at his level of psychological readiness.

First, we create a space that is orderly and child-sized. Here, the child feels comfortable. The environment fits him like a fine pair of slippers. He doesn't feel small or out of place. He *relates* to the room. The order of the room assists him in orienting, in getting to know the physical space. Its consistency means that he can count on finding what he needs. Here, he can establish a secure relationship with the objects in the room.

Secondly, we offer a community of peers to the child. It is a diverse group. There is a three year age span, or more. There are rich opportunities to relate in many different ways. The age differences allow for true spontaneous helping to occur (a cornerstone of a strong society). The group is consistent; everyone comes everyday. The teacher is the same person every day. The child can settle into this community and quickly feel that she is a vital member. In fact, she is missed by all when she is not there.

A third and essential element of the prepared environment that promotes grace and courtesy is the freedom we extend to the child. He may choose his activity. If he is unable to do so, we do not immediately make the choice for him but help him learn how to make a decision. He may make contact with another person whenever he feels moved to do so. If he is not allowed to act on his spontaneous urge to talk, we know that the opportunity will be lost. The young child lives in the present moment. Putting off a desire to speak to another is nearly impossible. In an atmosphere of freedom, the child will experience – in a natural way – mutual help, sharing, respect, cooperation and acts of kindness and generosity.

Inseparable from the freedoms are the limits that we impose within our classroom community. I say "impose" because that is exactly what we must do. Young children are incapable of judging the moral implications of behavior, and so *we* must determine the limit to the freedoms they exercise and *convey them clearly to the child.* This will take some thought and planning on our part. The child may or may not choose to exercise all the freedoms afforded her on a given day (to eat snack, to engage in conversation, to go outside and water the garden, to place their flower arrangement in the entrance hall – all those decisions made without asking an adult for permission), but going beyond the well-defined limit of the freedoms is not an option. We, as directresses, will choose our limits by determining what is best for the community of children and for the individuals living in that community. Limits have nothing to do with control or classroom management and everything to do with independence.

It is the freedom and limits of the community that determine the quality of the social life of our classroom. This is the element that defines social development in a Montessori classroom, that makes possible the social opportunities afforded the children. Social development is so much more than children getting along together! All the children benefit from all the social interchanges. The individuals gain in goodness and the group gains in goodness. The obvious gains are to the practitioners: to act graciously ennobles me. But to the recipient of grace comes the divine energy of being cherished. To allow oneself to receive grace at the hands of another is perhaps a lesson greater than giving. And the group in which we live should be so wonderful that it includes as a constancy, as part of its firmament, that we are noble and cherished in turn. These thoughts bring to mind the Shaker folk song, *Simple Gifts*:

'Tis a gift to be simple, 'Tis a gift to be free,
'Tis a gift to come 'round where we ought to be.
And when we find ourselves in the place just right,
'Twill be in the valley of love and delight.

When true simplicity is gained,
To bow and to bend, we shan't be ashamed,
But to turn, turn will be our delight,
'Till by turning, turning, we come 'round right.

I want to draw your attention to the way in which we convey the freedoms and limits to the children. We do so through presentations, just as carefully prepared as a table washing demonstration. These are grace and courtesy lessons: how to behave appropriately in the classroom, how to get what you need without imposing on the freedoms of the other members of the community. Our technique of respectfully *presenting* the appropriate behavior frees us from the constant need to direct, to command and to correct, and it frees the child from being treated disrespectfully. Our respect for the children dictates that we guide them, inform them, orient them, so that we give them the independence to be free in the environment: to act, according to established norms, without needing our assistance and supervision.

The final element of the prepared environment that assists the child in living graciously is the directress. We are the models that will inform and inspire the children in their poise and conduct. Any of you who are teachers know how powerful you are in influencing the behavior of young children. They will admire and imitate us no matter what we do. This awesome power carries great responsibility. We must attend to our every movement, our every word. More potent than any grace and courtesy lesson is the way we interact with the children.

As I was writing this talk I had occasion to consult a thesaurus. I was looking for alternate words for grace and courtesy. The words I found were not quite synonyms; their meanings were subtle and provocative. I discovered that the list was a good check for my own behavior. Have I been some or all these things for the children? ... and had I found ways to create opportunities for the children to acquire these traits? Here's the list:

- refined
- attentive
- kind
- polite
- civil
- courtly
- cultivated
- elegant
- cultured
- dignified
- affable
- amiable
- courteous
- friendly
- considerate
- diplomatic
- respectful
- mannerly
- fair
- honest

The ultimate question is, of course, do I have these attributes in real life? Of course I can "put them on" when I need them but some might question the validity – if the traits are not mine, they do not truly carry me to the child.

In the prepared environment, our well-mannered behavior takes on a particular significance. We are the living example of how to live graciously within the community of the classroom. Through our behavior, we assist the child in development; we want to aid her independence. Aside from being respectful and gracious, we must be consistent in our relations with children. This allows the child to see us and the environment as predictable. It also gives her an example of one way to behave in the environment. She may choose to imitate our phrases and gestures or she may find her own, based on the knowledge that she has gained from observing and interacting with us.

We make sure our interchanges are meaningful and satisfying to the child. (Are we addressing this particular individual and this particular time? Do we know her need?) We use interesting and precise vocabulary. Our conversations are informative without being preachy. We are active listeners, as well. A true conversation is an exchange. Both parties listen, both parties talk, and both respond to the other.

Grace and Courtesy Lessons

Our grace and courtesy lessons will be a bit more immediate than our everyday behavior in demonstrating appropriate behavior. These presentations will be customized to the particular children and to the particular culture of our classrooms. As the child becomes conscious and interested in social interchange, she will be shown a variety of practical ways to satisfy her needs. We will give her the freedom to apply this knowledge as she is psychologically ready to assume the responsibility.

Our lessons of grace and courtesy will spare the child confusion and awkwardness in social situations. They will spare her the need to depend on adults for directions or promptings. The lessons will require planning, anticipating the needs of individuals as well as the group.

For the youngest children, we will introduce the very basic lesson of refined movement or grace: how to walk, how to carry an object, how to sit in a group, how to stand in a group, how to form a group. And then, as an awareness and interest in others develops, we can add more challenge: how to get someone's attention (use their name, look in their eyes), how to greet another, how to take one's leave, how to ask for assistance. To foster social relations further: how to relate something to another, how to invite someone to play, to have a snack or to work together. As the child begins to understand other people's needs and feelings: how to offer help, how to ask to join a group, how to enter a conversation, how to listen attentively, how to express gratitude or appreciation, how to eat and converse, how to answer the telephone, how to offer refreshment, how to greet a visitor, how to tell a story or make an announcement, how to start a conversation, how to ask leading questions, how to avoid hurting another's feelings (birthday parties), how to express a differing opinion.

Through the grace and courtesy lessons, we will help the young child understand the behavior that she encounters: the body language, the facial expressions, the words. We also will help her to find her own expression within the environment. The lessons of grace and courtesy allow her to *be* herself in the "valley of love and delight."

Ultimately, our goal is that the child will grow, as an adult, to consider all of humankind – past, present and future – in her behavior. She will assume the joy and responsibility of taking part in society and contributing to its cohesion and evolution. Even in the absence of other people, she will live with consciousness of others. She will be careful with the earth's resources so that future generations can lead safe and satisfying lives. She will leave her place ready for the next person and feel gratitude for those who preserved her place. She will realize that we make the world in which we live. ❖

Janet McDonell is a primary trainer at the Washington Montessori Institute. She also holds the AMI elementary and special education diplomas. Her educational background includes a B.A. in comparative literature and a M.Ed. in Montessori education. Ms. McDonell has over 20 years experience in teaching and administration in Montessori schools across the nation.

Grace and Courtesy During the Years of Lost Manners

Allyn Travis

Based on her work with and observations of children, Dr. Montessori identified four different phases or planes of development through which all human beings pass from birth to adulthood. Each of these six year periods of growth is marked by certain distinguishing characteristics. It is the change in characteristics that, therefore, marks the passage from one plane to the next.

One of the clear signs that a child has passed into the second plane of development is when the charming manners, the delight in pleasing others, disappears. In *From Childhood to Adolescence* Maria Montessori says that the child of this age is "less gentle, less accommodating." In one of the lectures she gave on *The Four Planes of Education* at the 7th International Montessori Congress in Edinburgh in 1938, she puts this idea forward more strongly when she says that the earlier "sweetness of character gives way to a certain hardness, so much so, that this phase of life which continues until adolescence, has been called the age of rudeness."

In *To Educate the Human Potential*, Montessori says, "Mothers often feel hurt because their children, formerly all love and affection, have become impertinent and rudely domineering." Montessori explains this change in the child as part of nature's logical plan, where the aim is to arouse in this child "not only a hunger for knowledge and understanding, but a claim to mental independence, a desire to distinguish good from evil by his own powers, and to resent limitation by arbitrary authority."

Those of us living with and/or working with this age child need to understand the significance of this characteristic to the burgeoning personality at the second plane of development. It is in our ability to recognize this as a positive characteristic, a constructive characteristic, and in knowing how to meet the needs of this characteristic, that we will best be able to help the child develop her full potentialities.

During the first six years of life, the child goes from being totally dependent on others for the meeting of her physical needs to an amazing degree of physical independence. As long as the necessary opportunities are provided for the child to watch and see the actions that others in her environment are carrying out, as long as the necessary freedom is given so that the child can start to make these movements herself and carry out these activities herself and then as long as she is given the freedom to continue practicing these activities so that she learns to make them better and better, by the end of the first plane of development the child is capable of meeting many of her physical needs in a basic way herself. A degree of physical independence has been achieved that will continue to grow and expand in the years ahead.

The young child in the first plane of development likes to learn all of the courtesies of social life. If someone demonstrates these courtesies, the children are interested in learning how to greet other people, how to excuse themselves when they pass in front of others, how to blow their noses. The children are interested in clothes and like to see well dressed people around them. They like to be well dressed themselves.

But then the child enters the second plane of development, the stage during which childhood is completed. Physical independence is not enough. Now the child must also begin to attain a greater degree of intellectual independence. In order to take her place in society as a thinking, reasoning, logical, productive human being, nature is pushing her to spread her wings, to test her limits, to make decisions that are within her power to make on her own, to see what will work and what will not work, to learn what is right and what is wrong, what is good and what is bad.

Both parents and teachers see various manifestations of the 'testing of the limits.' It can be in ways as simple as a moratorium on the use of 'please' and 'thank you,' long after the use of these courtesies has become part of the child's everyday speech. It is as if the child is subconsciously asking, "Can I still get what I want without saying please? Is this going to be good enough – or is there a higher standard to which I will be held? Why? Is this going to be good enough or not?" Testing the limits. The child wants and needs to use her own judgment, which is often quite different from ours. These children often have a quick retort to whatever we say; they have become rebels. The child is claiming her mental independence; she must learn to distinguish what is right and what is wrong for herself. She can only learn to make these distinctions by practicing herself, trying out different ways. And yet we, the adults in her life, need to guide her and help her understand the reasons for making good decisions.

Much of this testing done by the children is fairly harmless and can often be dealt with using a sense of humor. What is important to remember is that the adult must know what the acceptable limits are – and hold the child to them. There is a line which we do not want to let them cross into rude, hurtful behavior. Not saying the word *please* is one thing; being crude and hurtfully mean is quite another. Having grace means being respectful, wishing the other well, even if we don't happen to like these particular people. We are not going to like everybody, but we can still wish them well. That is where we may really need grace and courtesy, sometimes more than any other time!

Consistency in our expectations of the children right from the beginning will guide the child to an understanding of what is considered to be appropriate behavior. But we must also remember the other part of what Montessori said, that the child will "resent limitation by arbitrary authority." It is not enough to tell a child that she must do whatever we desire because we want her to do it. There has to be a logical reason, and the children at this age want to know those reasons; otherwise it can so easily be perceived as that 'arbitrary authority,' sometimes saying one thing should be done and other times saying the opposite should be done. That kind of arbitrariness does not help the child build up for herself an understanding of her limits. And that's what we must remember nature is pushing her to do, so that is what we must help her do.

Sometimes the reason a certain courtesy is expected is as simple as the fact that this is how we show respect for another human being. This might be the simplest reason of all, but it is also the most important reason. Sometimes there is a historical reason for why a given society has adopted a certain courtesy. In the elementary these historical reasons can be given to the children, so that many of the customs and courtesies of our culture can come into the life of the class through the history stories we tell as part of Cosmic Education.

Montessori recognized that during the second plane of development the child longs for an understanding of the world and how it functions; she is searching for an understanding of life on earth and how all life forms relate to each other. A cosmic vision is, therefore, presented to the elementary children and is what we refer to as Cosmic Education. As we develop the theme of cosmic education in our classes, we need to remember that history is at the center of this theme. Through our history stories, we develop the idea of the creation of the universe, the creation of our Earth, and the coming of life onto this Earth. The children are told stories about the coming of all the various life forms and finally of the coming of human beings. We then begin to share some of the accomplishments of human beings since their arrival on Earth. The importance and significance of all life forms is brought out in our stories, with special emphasis on the importance of human beings, because we are human beings.

Human beings have been granted some special gifts, intellect and will, reason and love. Human beings have the possibility of thinking about what they are doing and of choosing what to do. We are beings who can reflect on our thoughts and think about our actions, who can choose to show good will or ill will, to show respect or disrespect, to exhibit grace or lack of grace. We can reflect upon our actions and choose to do things differently the next time. During the second plane of development the intellect and the ability to reason are developing very rapidly. We must make use of this ability; we must engage the reasoning power of the child, so that the child sees and understands why being courteous to others is right and just. These are other human beings, each of whom has never been before and each of whom will never be again. In spite of whatever flaws or defects we may perceive them to have, in spite of whatever differences of opinion we might have with them, we can choose to recognize their uniqueness and value and we can honor that value with our respect. Grace and courtesy exhibited to our fellow human beings.

Let's pause for a moment and think about today's society. Where are our young people learning correct manners? What kind of grace and courtesy is being modeled for them in this society? The National Association of Educational Progress reported in 1995 that American children spent about one third of their awake time watching television. Are they learning respect for other human beings through the hundreds of hours they are each spending watching television each year? What kind of 'grace and courtesy' are they seeing exhibited by the characters who constantly put down each other, by the characters who belittle the shortcomings of others, by the sex and violence portrayed on the screen? Television is a very powerful force in the lives of today's young people, affecting not only their grace and courtesy, but their ability to concentrate, the level at which they are reading and how much time they are spending reading, and their desire to work.

Another force in today's society that is not lending itself to the development of grace and courtesy is the computer. It seems that if children aren't watching television, they are sitting in front of the computer screen. Some young people seem to be 'tuning out' the rest of the world, tuning out society and becoming loners with their computers. Conversations with other children are becoming fewer and fewer as the children spend more and more time with these machines. Rather than working out social relationships, these children are becoming mechanical, learning input and output. They are avoiding the sometimes painful social growth experiences of childhood by bonding with their computers. Does this mean they are going to miss out on the rewards of human relationships later on in life as well?

There is an obvious isolation associated with the computer, wonderful tool that it can be. Children used to spend so many more hours playing, working out relationships with each other through their play, exploring different roles and different modes of behavior with each other, making up games, playing school. These role playing opportunities are so important for the development of social understanding and grace and courtesy. The children need these times to practice interacting with each other in different ways. Subconsciously, it is as if the child is asking, "If I treat this person in this way, how does he react? If we are making up a game of our own, is everyone happy with the rules? Is everyone treated fairly?" It can be safer to try out feelings and emotions in a play situation than in a real situation. These play situations can then serve as a foundation for positive social interaction later. Computers and television do not provide these. And I have not even mentioned Nintendo and video games!

The American family is composed more often these days by either a single parent or two working parents. The repercussions of this are widespread but, for the purposes of this lecture, let me say that real conversations between adults and children are becoming fewer and fewer. Recent studies report that, on average, today's American father really converses with his child for about ten minutes a day. Mothers, who used to be the ones to spend hours talking with their children, are often working outside the home and maintaining the house as well in today's society. The parents work long hours and are tired after a full day. It is easier to plop down in front of the television and space out together than it is to play family games or carry on a conversation. Much is made of the debate over quality time versus quantity time spent between parents and children. The fact of the matter is that discussions with our children about right and wrong, about morality, about showing kindness and generosity to others, all take time, time that is often not present in our family life.

If the adults in a child's life are not helping her think about these issues, where is she going to turn for the answers? To her peers? To television? Are those the primary sources we want to leave these children with for their moral development?

Many of the social opportunities that used to be afforded children, and through which they used to have the chance to experience the kindness and generosity of others, are no longer part of childhood. Families eating meals all together at the table, discussing how each person's day has gone, what the children think about news items or world situations and so on, are becoming rare occasions. Neighbors banding together to help each other in times of need (barn raisings) are so seldom a natural part of their lives any longer. Stopping along the side of the road to help a stranger, reaching out a hand to help one in need: more difficult to model in today's society when you may be putting your own life in danger if you stop.

These are some of the contemporary issues that make our jobs as Montessori elementary teachers and our jobs as parents of elementary aged children more difficult than ever. At the same time we have wonderful opportunities to help the children in our classes develop kindness, respect, humanity, good will, altruism, mercy, charity – all synonyms of the word grace – as well as consideration, favor, dispensation, indulgence, service, privilege – synonyms of the word courtesy.

If we are observant of elementary aged children, we see that they become preoccupied with what is ethical in life, what is good and what is bad. This age child wants to know what it means to be good, what it means to be bad. Is she good, is she bad, is she right, is she wrong? Teachers in six to nine classes are familiar with the manifestation of this preoccupation in the children who keep coming to them to report what other children are doing. Sometimes the reported activity will be mischievous and other times it will be positive. Each time the reporting child wants to know if it is good or bad. Is it acceptable behavior or is it not acceptable behavior? This can appear to the uninformed to be tattletaling. Generally, it is not. It is the need of the child to establish for herself what is considered good behavior in this class and what is considered to be bad behavior. Once she has established this, she will stop coming to the teacher.

The teacher needs to respond to the child each time by letting her know that the behavior is all right, if it is, or that it is not appropriate, if that is the case. If there is mischief taking place or something inappropriate that is pointed out to the teacher, just say you will take care of it later – and then do so. Do not make a big deal out of it; you do not want this to turn into tattletaling. (The exception here, of course, is a dangerous situation; common sense tells you to take care of that immediately!) This need for confirmation of right and wrong behavior is an aspect of running a six to nine class that can take a great deal of patience on the part of the teacher. Some groups of children can drive you quite batty unless you understand the constructive process going on within the child.

Montessori observed that elementary children have a need to associate themselves with others, not just to keep each other company, but in some sort of organized fashion. They like to mix with others in a group wherein each member of the group has a particular status. They generally choose a leader and this leader is obeyed.

They often establish their own rules, their own code of ethical behavior, some of which might strike us as quite bizarre. Strong groups can be formed in this way and many opportunities are afforded the children to practice their social skills. They have the opportunity here to practice rules that they can handle because they have made them up; and they have the opportunity to practice their own code of ethics. It is important that we allow for these groups and give them opportunities to function.

These groups can band together for good and they can band together for mischief. We do need to be observant and not to allow 'gangs' to develop. One way in which we help prevent this from happening is by mixing up the groups of children to which we present our lessons. Keeping the interests and ability levels of the children in mind, as needed, we can call together different combinations of children, introducing them to different aspects of Cosmic Education. In this way we might afford children who have not worked together before the chance to realize they share a similar interest or a common goal and they would like to pursue it together. Our groups should always be mixed up keeping these ideas in mind. Our groups should not be based on the grade levels, 'first graders,' 'second graders,' 'third graders.' If we lump the children together in this way, they will tend to group themselves together in this way, and then the real mixing up and variety does not happen.

The follow up work that the children choose to do after our lessons should, to a large extent in the elementary, be cooperative group work, another opportunity to practice grace and courtesy. Working together in a truly cooperative fashion means sharing out the various parts of the undertaking, deciding who is going to gather the different pieces of information, making a joint decision on how this information is going to be put together in final form, deciding as a group how the project will be shared with the rest of the class. This often means that not everyone can do it their way and having the grace to accept this; to indulge the opinions of the rest of the group, to show consideration for the strengths of the other members of the group, and to show mercy for the weaknesses of the others. This group work is very different from parallel work where children are sitting together each working on the same thing. That does not take the kind of cooperation that group work takes; it does not involve the same kind of interactions between the children.

In her work with second plane children Montessori became aware of the fact that these children needed a wider society to explore than the younger children. The first plane children were satisfied with home and family and, then, the *Casa dei Bambini*. The elementary children had too many questions, were looking for the reasons why and how, and they had to have a wider field for their explorations. She recognized that they needed to get out into society, to explore that society, to start to learn how to take their places in that society, and to find answers to their questions about why things and how substances and objects function as they do. All of the answers cannot be provided (and we should not try to provide them all) in the classroom or in the school.

Therefore, what we refer to as "Going Out" is an essential component of a Montessori elementary class. Montessori said in her 1938 lecture on *The Four Planes of Education*, "What he likes is to go out. The limitation of the home and its protection now becomes irksome. This urge is so great that we think that at this age they should have part of their life out of home and school. The previous phase's environment, a house full of small furniture and beautiful things, is no longer adequate or satisfying. The effort he made in the first phase to avoid help, to do things by himself, is no longer adequate or satisfying. He needs a different and a greater effort. The contacts with the school which in the previous phase completed the experiences he found at home, are not enough. He feels the need of something different; a more rigid environment with far wider social contacts." And a bit later she says, "He requires to go out into the world to make wider contacts with both nature and human society."

Do you see the repercussions here of having too many books in the class library? Or worse yet, of having a school library? If we make it possible to find all of the information at school, the need to go out to find those answers is eliminated. At the same time we have eliminated all of those wider social contacts.

Part of our responsibility as Montessori elementary teachers is to prepare the children in our class for "going out." This preparation includes giving the presentations and lessons from our albums so that we open the doors, we give the first introduction or the first key to the concept; and make sure that we are giving enough information to interest the children while at the same time letting them know there is much more to find out about this. If we stir up that interest and set their minds working, we are building up the need on the part of the children to go out to find out more, to answer their questions, to satisfy their curiosity.

These expeditions out of the classroom should be planned by the children. This is very different from field trips, where the teacher takes the initiative or makes the plans. We do need to help the children develop the necessary skills in order to do this planning. They need to be made aware of possible places to go related to what they are studying, in many cases what the hours of operation are, if there is an admission fee and how much, where the place is located, how they can get there, how they can gather and bring back to the classroom the information they are after, and so forth.

Many of the grace and courtesy lessons in the elementary class are related to the "going out" program. A child may need to call a place of business to schedule a visit, to find out more information, to get directions. The teacher needs to make sure the child knows how to make this kind of phone call: how to identify herself, to explain the purpose of her phone call and to thank the person on the other end of the line for his help.

If the children are going to be using public transportation to get to the place they are visiting, they need to know how to politely use this transportation: how to stand in line, how to have the money ready when one boards, what to do with their backpack or umbrella. Because of the characteristics of this age child, they are not so receptive to simply being shown how to carry out these courtesies or, worse yet, simply being told. We can catch their interest in how these activities might best be carried out by using humor and role playing. If we show the children through a funny little skit what happens when the opposite behavior is carried out, we can catch their attention and involve them in thinking about how the situation could be handled differently so that the results turned out more positively for everyone.

Many of us who were trained by Miss Stephenson will never forget her little skit of standing in the bus line in the rain with an umbrella. She gets to the door of the bus and, oh dear, where is her fare? She searches through each pocket; meanwhile, the umbrella is jostled from arm to arm, shoulder to shoulder, poking the people behind her. You can even imagine the water running off the umbrella onto the person behind her. Finally, she finds the money and, much to everyone's relief, can get on the bus. The umbrella is still open, people are being poked, water is dripping on others ... you get the picture!

Of course, everyone laughs when seeing a skit like this. But then we ask the children what they might do differently; proper manners, kindness and courtesies will naturally come out of the children discussing and realizing for themselves the difference they can make to other people. This is a way of appealing to their sense of fairness and justice, characteristics at this plane of development.

Grace and courtesy need to be exhibited by the children in the classroom before we would even consider their being ready to leave the classroom on a "going out." If they cannot show kindness and respect in the classroom, it is not very likely that they would exhibit those behaviors in the outside society. The teacher helps the children realize what the expectations inside the classroom are and how these must be shown before they will be ready for these outside trips. This can certainly be a motivating factor for some children who otherwise have lost interest in using conventional manners. When they do go out, they have wonderful opportunities to practice grace and courtesy in a wider field than the classroom and family provides for them. This is what makes it real and purposeful for them.

After a "going out" has taken place, the children involved need to thank the people who assisted them. This may involve writing thank you notes to the parent who provided transportation or the guide at the museum. This gives us an opportunity to incorporate this gracious act into the everyday life of the class. The children are much more likely to incorporate a courtesy like writing thank you notes into their own lives, if they have the opportunity to see and understand the purpose for themselves rather than just being taught how to write this form of letter as a composition lesson unrelated to their lives.

One of the aspects of "going out" that was very important to Montessori is the idea of community service. By going out into the community as part of their research or to see phenomena in reality that have been first introduced in the classroom, the children come in contact with a wide spectrum of society. This gives them the opportunity to become aware of people and situations where they can do something to help. This might take the form of serving soup at a food kitchen, collecting food for the hungry or clothing for the homeless, grocery shopping for a shut in, cleaning up a park, shoveling snow for someone who has broken her leg, visiting the elderly – the possibilities are really endless if we think of the people in need. It is particularly the nine to twelve children that should be involved in some form of community service. And isn't this the kind of grace and courtesy we need to see all members of society showing each other? Because of the children's sensitivity at this age to morality and justice, righting the wrongs of society is appealing to this age child. We can then hope that this attitude and some of these ways of helping others will carry over into the rest of their lives.

We have other opportunities in the classroom to make courtesies purposeful for the children. Many elementary classes have a guest book and a child in the class has the honor of asking a visitor to sign their guest book. Often times, a visitor to an elementary class is offered a cup of tea or a cup of coffee. One or two children are the hosts or hostesses for the week, offering the tea, preparing the tea, setting it out in an attractive fashion for the visitor. The fancier the set up, the more care that is needed by the children: a china cup and saucer, a cloth napkin, perhaps a doily under the saucer, often a special little serving table put next to the visitor to hold the cup. Sometimes a little vase of flowers is put on the table. The children take pride in setting this up for the visitor and in seeing that the visitor is pleased. Once again, a much more effective way of bringing the children back to an awareness of grace and courtesy when their characteristics otherwise would be leading them in another direction.

Visitors to elementary classrooms can be dealt with in many different ways. I have been in classes where the moment I walk in the door, a child comes over and introduces herself, asking me if I would like a chair. That can certainly make a visitor feel more comfortable and welcomed than being totally ignored. Have you ever been in the situation where you are ignored? You end up trying to stand out of the way, not block a shelf, not step on someone's work – you end up sometimes wishing you weren't there or wanting to sink through the floor! Would we ignore a guest who came into our home? Opportunities abound for grace and courtesy to become a reality for these children.

Through the stories and work we do in history we can make grace and courtesy, etiquette, use of manners, come alive for the children. Etiquette is a code of behavior that helps people get along with one another. We can experience in our classrooms that our society functions more smoothly and we get along better if we all follow certain behavior guidelines. We can also experience what happens when those guidelines are not followed, and we can discuss how this affects the life of the class.

We can then include in our history stories the fact that as prehistoric people began to interact with one another, they learned to behave in ways that made life easier and more pleasant. We can imagine that the manners which resulted had a practical purpose. For example, when two people met they may have both extended their right hand to show that they were not carrying weapons. Shaking hands became a sign of friendship; it is still considered a gesture of courtesy, though the practical reason for showing an empty hand has disappeared. (Perhaps we are nearing the time when the practical purpose will be back.)

As we know, each culture has its own system of etiquette and these can vary widely from culture to culture. What is considered proper behavior in one culture can be considered quite rude in another. The children are fascinated by these differences and about learning the reasons for the differences. My daughter came home from a trip to Italy in April with an example for me. In America when eating at the table, it is considered proper to put the hand not holding the fork in your lap. In Italy, it is considered proper to put that hand on the table – to show you are not groping the person sitting next to you! You have to admit that the tour guide who told this to a group of fifteen year olds knew how to catch their attention and develop an interest in table manners!

The origins of many of the manners still used today can be traced to the Middles Ages in Europe. At that time boys training to be knights had to learn a code of conduct called chivalry. Some aspects of chivalry, especially the special treatment of women, became part of the manners taught to later generations. During the 1600's and 1700's the nobles at the French court did not work, and so they developed elaborate social customs just to keep themselves from becoming bored. The nobles drew up a list of proper social behavior and called it an etiquette. This etiquette soon spread to other European courts and eventually was adopted by the upper classes throughout much of the Western world.

The word etiquette came from an old French word *(estiquet)* meaning label. There are two words that we have in American English today that both have this same root: etiquette and ticket. Wouldn't those be fun to use for *word families*? And to discuss with the children what they have in common!

Etiquette has changed and still changes frequently in response to changes in a given society. Over the years the style of life lived by many of us has become more casual, and the rules of etiquette have become much less rigid than they were at one time. The children can investigate what some of these changes have been, what the code of conduct would have dictated in the Middle Ages or in the French courts and what would be considered acceptable today.

Sometimes, as new inventions come into common use, new rules of behavior need to be developed. For example, when the telephone came into use, telephone etiquette had to be developed. That etiquette was different back in the days when we had party lines (several families sharing the same phone line) than it is today when we have call waiting and have to decide if we are going to put one call on hold to take a second. Now the telephone is something that young people can really relate to, already have an interest in, and offers us the opportunity to pass on a little etiquette.

The changing roles of men and women in society today have brought about changes in the rules of etiquette. The children need to know that at one time in history women were perceived to be weaker than men and in need of protection. As they have come to be accepted on a more equal basis, behavior between men and women has become more relaxed and natural. Now the primary factor governing etiquette is consideration of others and awareness of their needs. We may not always agree with the changes made by society, but learning to deal with the changes graciously helps people get along with one another. And that is what we want to help the children do.

The age of rudeness, the years of lost manners, the second plane of development: an incredibly wonderful time of life when the child enters into the abstract, when he is mainly interested in the how and why, the time of life when the creative faculty of the imagination comes into play, an interest in being part of a group can be observed, and justice and morality is being developed. Although the outward manifestation of a lack of manners at this age can make the adult think this is an impossible age at which to teach the children grace and courtesy, it is precisely at this age that we can engage their interest in understanding the reasons for manners and customs. It is the arbitrary authority that they are rebelling against, not fairness and justice.

When their sensitivities and reasoning ability are appealed to, this is the stage in life when they can come to an understanding of the interdependencies and interrelatedness of all human beings. If we can help each child understand and feel her importance, if we can help each child respect him or her self, then perhaps they will be able to begin to appreciate the importance of all other life and they will begin to treat others with respect and good will.

A person has to have a sense of self worth first, before one is going to be able to recognize the worth of others. In today's society this is perhaps one of our greatest challenges. But if we can help them feel grace and mercy for themselves, to accept themselves for who they are, recognizing their strengths and accepting their weaknesses, we will have given them a gift greater than any academic studies they may also have mastered.

Manners are not really lost during the second plane of development. Perhaps it would be more accurate to say they become dormant. These children can be charming, respectful, altruistic, kind, indulgent, favorful, gracious and courteous. They just have to have a reason for being that way! ❖

Allyn S. Travis has a B.A. in English from Michigan State University and an M.A. in Montessori education from Loyola College in Maryland. She holds both AMI primary and elementary diplomas and has over twenty years teaching experience. Mrs. Travis is an AMI elementary teacher trainer, examiner, and school consultant. She is currently the Director of Training at the Montessori Institute of Milwaukee, Inc.

Growing Responsive Schools: An Evolving Theory of Montessori Administration

Sharon L. Dubble, Ph.D.

The size and diverse programming of this conference attest to the growth and development of Montessori education. What has come to be known as Montessori education is a unique complex of philosophy, psychology, educational theory and instructional materials. Yet Dr. Montessori did not intend to create an educational method. And nowhere in her writings can I find reference to Montessori schools as organizations. Maria Montessori did not provide us with blueprints for building schools, let alone models for trustees or school administrators.

Throughout this country, Montessori schools are expanding and developing. Most of the early schools were originally small teacher-directed classrooms or parent cooperatives. As Montessori schools expanded, the perceived need for a separate administrator became more common.

I would assume that, like myself, most of you who have accepted that role were not driven by a strong desire to be an administrator or to create school policies or to oversee capital campaign drives. We were, instead, drawn by a vision of the normalized child – and then put ourselves in service to that vision, willing to dedicate ourselves in a manner which Dr. Montessori described as "aiding life, leaving it free however to construct itself."

However, unlike Montessori teachers with their albums and prescribed training, there was no common or standard set of guidelines available to Montessori administrators and no formal training. So it was logical that we Montessori administrators, sometimes feeling insecure in our knowledge or preparation, looked to other administrative models for examples and direction.

We looked to the business community, to the public schools, to non-profit organizations, and especially to the private independent prep schools. We found, and continue to find, some very helpful strategies and techniques. Yet, I question the wholesale application of many of these approaches. While specific results and increased efficiency can often be noted, the 'fit' of most of these approaches somehow does not seem completely successful.

Just as knowledge of materials and methods of presentation is not sufficient to create a Montessori class, knowledge of managerial skills and administrative procedures is not sufficient to develop a Montessori school. More and more, I am seeing that the same elements which are essential to the unique character of Montessori pedagogy are also essential to the unique entity which is a Montessori school. Although we have no 'administrator albums' for common reference, as Montessorians we do have a distinct reference to guide our work: the principles of human development.

We are called to risk being radical, something very difficult for administrators! What is needed is a realignment of our own role with the larger vision. Just as Maria Montessori evolved a radically new concept of education, we are evolving a radically new concept of school. Dr. Montessori came to understand education as much more than merely the transmission of knowledge or the molding of character. Rather, she said, the purpose of education is to aid the full development and release of human potentialities.

In that same vein, we need to re-envision the Montessori school, not as an educational institution or organization to be built and managed, but rather as an organism, something living and evolving; something to be developed and respected. Our administrative role, then, is directed by the same radical vision which Dr. Montessori saw as the goal of education. Our schools must seek the release of human potential in all aspects their work.

This is where Dr. Montessori's work becomes an invaluable guide. Far beyond any material or method, Montessori's genius lay in her keen observations of the child and the resulting articulation of those principles which underlie the actual process of development. She insisted that our educational practice be informed by a philosophy in concert with the natural laws of human growth.

She asked, "What is it to be human?" She then described those needs and tendencies which define human nature. She asked, "How can those needs and tendencies be used towards fullest possible development?" Then she showed how all methods, environments, and materials could be shaped and guided by an understanding of the process of human development. If our schools are to reflect this same dedication to human growth, then this philosophy must not only guide our classrooms, but must also shape and guide our organizational strategies, our procedures and our communications.

One of those key principles, or fundamental laws, of human development is the concept of interaction. Although Montessori education is imbued with a deep respect for the individual, we also recognize that the human being does not develop in isolation. There is hardly a more poignant or heartrending image than that of the "boy in the bubble," separated from the outside world in order physically to survive. Full development of the individual occurs through interaction with the environment, an environment which includes other people.

Indeed, the hallmark of human development is the manifestation of human civilizations. And interaction is intrinsic to civilizations, to the evolution of human culture. That is the focus of this conference: grace and courtesy as integral elements of the evolution of human society – a human responsibility.

The dictionary defines courtesy as "behavior marked by respect for others" and among the various definitions of grace is this one: "unmerited help given," a definition implying the aspect of human behavior we call service. How does this apply to Montessori administration? How do our schools become responsive and responsible to the development of human society? And what do respect and service suggest about our role as administrators?

The key is to begin to think organically rather than organizationally. Organic thinking emphasizes human self construction through the process of interaction, something which cannot be completely predicted or controlled. As we shift to organic thinking, we experience our schools as part of the same dynamic continuum of growth which characterizes the individual human experience.

I am not suggesting that we don't need to think about policies, procedures or planning. These are, indeed, important components or perhaps, more accurately, characteristics of a school community. What I am suggesting is that these components can truly characterize a Montessori school only if they emerge from an interactive process. A deepening understanding of this interactive process – this basic principle of human development – must be our ultimate guide in evolving a living, responsive administrative theory and practice.

Dr. Montessori clearly described this interactive process as she observed it in children. She spoke constantly of the self-construction of the individual. She emphasized that the child is not primarily molded by others; rather, the child builds her individual personality through interaction with the environment. According to this principle, then, education is primarily active rather than didactic, with the emphasis upon the child's activity rather than upon the adult's teaching.

In the same way, we need to think of our schools as living entities in the process of self-construction. They are not primarily molded or shaped by the administrator, but rather evolve their unique personalities through interaction with the various elements of the school environment. In this view of a developing school, the emphasis is upon the activity of the school community rather than upon administrative directives.

Again, Dr. Montessori's observations led her to discern the critical elements which promote natural self construction through interaction. First, there must be a prepared environment which allows for and encourages interaction. The careful preparation of the environment is on-going and rests upon an awareness of the various stages of development. Knowledge of the special characteristics of each stage allows the adult to create an environment which will be responsive to those particular sensitivities and tendencies.

Preparation of the environment is more than selecting materials. It involves a careful coordination of all resources including space, people, even time. The goal is not to have a pristine, ordered, controlled classroom but, instead, to create a kind of living laboratory which invites activity and discovery.

But it is not enough to prepare an environment and then place the child within it; the child needs to be linked to the environment. This linking function is a critical aspect of the adult's role, one which requires both careful observation and subtle artistry. The material or activity must connect with or spark an interest within the child. And the presentation or link is only intended to give the child a key which unlocks new possibilities for action. This is where artistry and restraint become paramount, for the purpose is not to give the child knowledge, but rather to give the child the opportunity, the opening, to acquire knowledge for herself.

And once the link has been made, the third critical element in the interactive process is that tricky concept of freedom. The child must have autonomy within the environment, the opportunity to act within the limits of responsibility. This freedom involves initiative, independence and self-control.

The individual must be free to choose an activity, a choice which is based upon knowledge, not merely whim or reaction. He is allowed to continue in his own time and style without unnecessary interference, learning through mistakes and frequent self-evaluation, and gradually building upon his own successes. And this cycle of autonomy continues with choices expanding in relation to both the expansion of knowledge and the child's willingness to regulate his behavior within the socially agreed-upon limits of responsible action.

We understand this interactive principle in our work with developing children. Why is it so difficult to translate this same principle into our work with adults and developing schools? I think it is because, in the administrative role, we revert from developmental, organic thinking to formulaic, organizational thinking.

Organizational thinking too often seeks to manage for efficiency and to structure relationships hierarchically. The emphasis is on building and then maintaining through policies and procedures. However, as we begin to see our schools as self-constructing entities and our administrative role as part of a living experience, the dominant way in which we plan and determine procedures in a Montessori school becomes a developmental process which incorporates those same elements that are critical to child's self-construction:

- a carefully prepared environment;
- links to opportunities for knowledge and discovery; and
- freedom tied to responsibility.

Thinking organically, then, does give us a clear administrative framework, although no simple step-by-step applications. It asks us to go beyond managerial techniques or strategies and to lead primarily through service. Montessori has given us the essential principles, the questions to ask in any given situation, "How can I serve the development of human potential? How can I respect and aid the life of this school, leaving it free, however, to construct itself?"

In every circumstance, if we are thinking organically, we shape our behavior by asking the key questions: "How should I prepare the environment? What kinds of links should I be making? Am I hindering or encouraging the opportunity for responsible freedom?"

Let's look at just one example of this rather organic administrative role. A teacher is constantly complaining that she has too many students with problems. In her comments to other staff and her meetings with you, she says she is highly stressed because her class is overloaded with students and many of them have special needs. "There is no way that I can have a real Montessori class with all these children," she claims. The teacher has suggested to other faculty that they lobby the board to set a mandatory maximum of twenty-two children per class.

For many of us here in this room, the wheels are already starting to spin around this example, probably already formulating a response. But how responsive is our plan of action? Is it primarily solution oriented? If we want to shift toward a more developmental orientation, we must frame our actions with the key questions inherent to an interactive process.

❖ How should I prepare the environment?

A first step might be critically to examine whether I am currently ensuring optimal classroom composition for the children. Is there a good balance of ages? Do most of the children remain for a three-year cycle? Do our admissions materials clearly state the age range for acceptance? Are we adding students to classes to achieve full enrollment and a positive bottom line without carefully considering how that alters the classroom dynamics?

And what about the teacher's stage of development? A new teacher will likely differ from a more seasoned teacher in his ability to incorporate students with a broader range of special needs and, therefore, may need to be given a more narrowly selected group of students for the first year. Have I taken this into consideration? And what are this teacher's unique gifts and challenges?

What kind of philosophical environment are we setting? What does our literature say about our purpose and the way we serve children? Are our admissions policy and our program consistent with what we say? What is our reputation in the community? Are we viewed as a Montessori prep school, a school that takes children who are having problems in traditional schools, an academically oriented preschool?

❖ What kinds of links can I make?

What kind of support does this teacher need? Should I provide more one-on-one meeting time to discuss her work with her? Is there another staff member who could observe on a regular basis and engage in active coaching and collaborative planning? What conference or material could provide information specific to this teacher's particular concerns about student needs?

How am I linking the staff? Are there forums for meaningful discussion and dialogue. Do teachers actively participate in determining meeting agendas and facilitating discussions? Do teachers readily bring questions to me and to group meetings?

What are the links needed between teacher and child and family to support the needs of the child, particularly when there are problems? Can greater involvement in the admissions process more firmly connect a teacher with a child? Are there clear and effective channels for communication for a variety of circumstances? Does the teacher know when and how to engage additional assistance? Am I available and involved in these important supports?

❖ Am I encouraging the opportunity for responsible freedom?

I need constantly to remind myself that the emphasis is on the activity of the school community rather than my administrative directives. If I've given careful consideration to preparing the environment and creating links, am I able to allow for interaction without controlling the outcome here? Does the teacher feel free to experiment with the conduct of her class? Can the staff openly debate the rationale for class size and composition? Will I support the formation of a committee to re-examine admissions procedures?

This kind of freedom is necessary and critical for fuller development of our schools as long as these actions remain responsible to the school's broad community covenants. For example, what are the agreements in our bylaws regarding our various responsibilities and communications? Does a teacher's direct lobbying of board members violate agreements about responsible behavior?

And what about the board? They are ultimately responsible for the well-being of the school. Do the members have a deep understanding of the mission of the school, a trust for which they are each accountable? Can they question and challenge me within a framework of clearly delineated responsibilities?

What guidelines do we use to make decisions? Do we refer more to Montessori's writings than to policy manuals? If the school is affiliated, are we familiar with our responsibilities in adhering to program guidelines? Does everyone in the school community, not just a few individuals, engage in ongoing discussions about our responsibilities to the children?

Administrators, of course, are expected to respond. But how responsive are we? Obviously, in this situation that I sketched, you would likely choose some fairly immediate actions. But I am suggesting that by primarily focusing on the key developmental questions you will create within the school an interactive cycle which ultimately leads to increased responsiveness and greater potential throughout the entire community.

Instead of merely solving problems, you are encouraging long-term growth. This in no way will prevent problems from occurring. In fact, I am convinced that conflict and questions are important signs of a healthy, living school organism.

In my view, it is the interactive process which is emerging as a theoretical model for our administrative approach. This doesn't provide a definitive blueprint or an operational formula for Montessori schools. But it does give us the framework for our administrative behavior. In that sense, it forms the basis for the "grace and courtesy lessons" of schools, the behavioral agreements within our school communities which work toward the highest development of human potential.

If we continue to enhance our common vision in line with Dr. Maria Montessori's radical view of education, we strengthen our understanding of common responsibility. We thereby become more response-able, able to respond broadly and fully. Then all members are more and more free to choose and to act with confidence according to changing needs. This interactive dynamic fosters a community climate where creativity, insight and human growth can flourish, where respect and service are core values.

By shifting to this kind of organic administrative thinking, we see grace and courtesy in the school as modeling development through interaction. And our Montessori schools become living organisms that contribute to the evolution of an ever more responsive human culture. ❖

Sharon L. Dubble, Ph.D., holds AMI primary and elementary diplomas as well as a doctorate in educational philosophy She has more than twenty years of Montessori teaching and administrative experience and currently serves as coordinator of the Montessori graduate program at Loyola College in Maryland.

Respect as the Foundation for Grace and Courtesy in the Elementary Classroom

Laura Smyczek

"The knowledge of courtesy and good manners is a very necessary study. It is, like grace and beauty, that which begets liking and an inclination to love one another at first sight."[1]

I would like to begin by saying that I will be in my fifth year of teaching next year, and I look forward to many years of learning how to create the best possible elementary Montessori classroom. I want to share with you some ideas I have at this point in my teaching career on encouraging respect in the classroom. These are things that I have done and that I have found, through experience, to work for me.

Our goal, as the adults in a Montessori classroom, is to prepare the child – the whole child – to become a responsible human being, able to make independent decisions and choices based on reason and good judgment, as well as to contribute to the good of the whole society. In Cosmic Education the children are shown the way in which we must respect all in the universe. This is brought to the practical level in the elementary classroom. The child begins in the classroom, which is a microcosm of society. Gradually, as he or she becomes more responsible and independent, he will move out into the larger society in which we all live. He must know how to function graciously, with kindness and respect for others. This is why grace and courtesy are absolutely essential, if we are to create a society in which civility and peace are valued over immediate gratification and self-satisfaction.

The child in the second plane of development is one with many gifts, such as the ability to reason, the use of imagination and compassion for others. Elementary children are, as we all know, quite honest in their comments and reactions. This is not the age of rudeness, as some may suggest, but the age of frankness. They simply need to be shown how to treat others with dignity, and they will rise to the occasion. They are very capable of meeting our standards, and we do them a great favor when we set them high. They also need to be respected by others so that they will show respect themselves. Dr. Montessori said, "Respect for the child and for his initiative is essential."[2]

Children observe our behavior and reactions constantly, and they learn from us. So we, as the adults, must model respectful attitudes toward each other, them and the environment. We must also always respect their own ideas and opinions. Because children have so many creative, imaginative and wonderful ideas to share, we must give them an opportunity to express their thoughts. In my class, that happens not only in lessons, but particularly during group time or in class meetings. The children are inventive in finding solutions to problems within the classroom, whether it be how to let another child know when he or she is hurting one's feelings, or how to place boots in the closet during the winter. So we must never dictate our will over theirs, but allow them to come up with their own choices and make their own decisions. This will aid in their development of self-confidence, too. Of course, we must at times guide them and help them to form good judgments, but their contributions are valuable and should be treated as such.

We show the children respect by allowing them to make choices rather than making choices for them. At the beginning of each school year, we discuss the class rules, but the children decide on them and verbally form them into statements. Then the rules are their own – they have chosen them and so want to live by them because they have reasoned them out and decided they exist for the good of the whole class. They are also, then, quick to point out another child who is not following one of ***their*** rules.

A child needs to know that we care about him or her. If we always show him respect and listen to him, he will be aware of that care and concern. If a child is having a personal difficulty, whether it be at home or with another child in the classroom, we must take the time to listen and be open with him. In this way, he will know his feelings are valid and that we care and are there to help in whatever way we are able.

To be respectful toward children we must be kind but firm. When we interact with them they should be able to maintain their self-respect. When I began teaching I used to wonder whether or not I was being too firm, but it is better to set down the expected standards early on than to have to go back later and amend them. We must always remember to respect the child we are dealing with and remember that he is a changing, developing human being. We must keep in mind that he holds all the beauty and wonder of someone who is still growing and learning. If we do this, we will act in a way that is for the good of the child and he will know this.

Dr. Montessori said, "The teacher must intervene and reprimand the children whenever they do something rude or careless that has no good impulse and does not lead to perfection… The teacher should never let one of these actions go unnoticed." She goes on to say that we, as the adults, must redirect a child who is acting uselessly, even if he is not as yet disturbing anyone, as these activities may lead to disruptions for the entire class. Disruptive activities could be two girls giggling or a child tossing his pencil in the air. I am firm but kind with them in letting them know that their actions are inappropriate in our classroom environment. Because children between the ages of six and twelve are able to use a reasoning mind, I give them the reason they may not act that way in the classroom, or sometimes they tell me the reason instead. If we do this consistently, Maria Montessori concluded, "the small details change a mediocre piece of work into a masterpiece."[3]

The children also observe us as they form their own code of morality, by watching our reactions to certain situations. So we must be the type of persons, inwardly, who will inspire graciousness and kindness, generosity of spirit and consideration. We must give the children the experiences they need to develop their own morality, so that when they are out in the world, they are able to make the decision to be kind instead of rude, generous instead of selfish, thoughtful instead of careless.

We are also helping the child to be self-motivated and self-disciplined, able to control his or her impulses, for the good of the whole. This is one area in which the children must show they have developed responsibility before they are given the freedom to take on more responsibility. They do this in many ways, including their jobs, work journals and weekly individual meetings with us. *Going Out* is another example of this. It is a point of arrival for a child. The child realizes that his actions are not isolated but can affect others. He is responsible for himself and his behavior.

Where does this idea of respect for all in the universe arise? In Cosmic Education, the idea of each being in the universe having a place comes into play. Dr. Montessori said: "Let us in education ever call the attention of children to the hosts of men and women who are hidden from the light of fame, so kindling a love of humanity; what is first wanted is no patronizing charity for humanity, but a reverent consciousness of its dignity and worth."[4]

We are to develop in the children a sense of gratitude and respect for unknown human beings throughout history who have contributed to our lives today. We do this in our telling of the Great Lessons. We give the children knowledge of common man. We let the children know we must thank the human being who invented the first chair: "Where would we be today without the progress made by the inventions of these unknown human beings?"

In *The Coming of Life* we tell the children: "If all had not happened as it did, the earth would not have been prepared and human beings would not have been able to survive." Here, we see the idea of gratitude to God, which Dr. Montessori also felt was important to give to the children. In a lecture Mario Montessori gave in 1958, he said: "The years we have spent in this work have shown up the enormous change that comes in children, the enormous respect that they develop for creation and every part of it. When they see that stones or colors or animals are simply aspects of the spiritual expression called creation and the path that life takes is an expression of spirituality because each item of creation is preparing, though unconsciously, a better situation for other creatures... This is what we want them to grasp..."[5]

A most important idea we must give the child is that all life forms throughout history have been preparing the way so that others may come onto the earth. In our training, we learned how "we want to arouse in the children an appreciation of the guiding unconscious, of God, by developing an appreciation of human beings, and of the plan of law and order that was set up to regulate all substances and life forms."[6]

At the end of the third Great Lesson, *The Coming of Human Beings*, we talk about how special each and every human being is, and then say, "That's why we have to be so careful how we treat each other, because each of us in our own way is special." The children learn in that lesson that human beings are particularly unique because they have the abilities to think and to love.

Showing the children how early human beings progressed – learning that with fire they could cook their meat instead of eating it raw – gives them an appreciation of the significance of their work and progress. They had to build from nothing! They must have been very clever! What gratitude we feel toward them!

In the history lessons we give, tracing civilizations such as the Four River and New World Civilizations, we want to share with the children the idea that this betterment of life has taken place because the people worked for the good of the whole group. Because we are fortunate enough to have certain advantages, we also have the responsibility to share with others.

In a lesson such as *People in Different Zones*, we discuss the differences among peoples who live in various parts of the world. These differences arise from the fact that we all satisfy the same human needs in a variety of ways. Through this, we can express the importance of understanding and tolerance for people who are different from ourselves. This understanding should lead to a greater respect for other human beings.

Our lessons on the interdependencies of all life also foster gratitude for other human beings. We say, "Look at the number of people who were involved in the making of the bread that Andy had for breakfast this morning! Imagine if you had to do all these jobs yourself!" Then in the second activity: "Look how many people depend upon the farmer for their work!" Again, in activity three: "Here are all the people the farmer depends on!" and we go on to say, "...No one is self-sufficient, are they? For the satisfaction of our basic needs, we are all dependent on each other." Through these exercises, including the final one on taxes, "the children will hopefully develop an appreciation for anonymous people, and will become better citizens themselves, knowing their own duties..."[7]

The economic geography lessons, also, can help the children understand the interdependencies of the global community. We want to show them that the world community is interdependent. "In order to accept, you must also give. Even if you have all the natural resources in the world, you cannot exist in isolation from other countries."[8] This will help the children realize that we are all part of the same whole. This awareness brings with it a sense of humility, which we must model ourselves.

This idea that we give as well as take, comes up again in biology, with plants and animals, which take from the earth but also give back to it. This is their cosmic task, just as we all have our own cosmic tasks. We must help the children think of their work as a cosmic task, contributing to the good of the whole, not as something we are forcing them to do. The child learns that there is a delicate balance between the earth and nature, and so hopefully will learn to act responsibly with regard to maintaining this balance. Human beings have the power to change the world, so we must help the children realize how much we depend on our environment. In this way, they will appreciate it and thus take care of it. The children must realize the need to be respectful, thoughtful and responsible in their choices. The children's study of ecology also shows the interdependence of organisms within the environment in which they live. With the Chart of Interdependence, we look at our dependence on the Supra Nature: "Once a discovery is made, it becomes the common property of all humanity."

In another of the Great Lessons, *The Story of Communication in Signs*, we express gratitude to the Phoenicians: "Thank you, Phoenicians" for the creation of the sound letters, the first alphabet, quite an exciting discovery. We say to the children: "What you have to remember and be grateful for is the story of the Phoenicians, because they made the first real letters for sounds." With a story such as the one that accompanies "The Hand Chart," in which the children discover what a short time human beings have been writing things down compared to the time they have been on the earth, the children see what a great contribution writing has made to our existence. As we do not know who created the very first written character, again we have gratitude for unknown man.

In *The Story of Numbers*, the last of the Great Lessons, this idea again resurfaces. We tell the children, "Once again we have someone, somewhere – we don't know the person's name – to be grateful to for giving us a way of recording numbers." It is interesting to note that this grand and noble idea of respect for others comes up in each of the Great Lessons. No wonder they are called "Great Lessons"! They hold the truths under which every other lesson falls.

Now, let us move on to the specific ways in which we can bring grace and courtesy into our own classrooms. One obvious way to maintain more courtesy in the classroom is to encourage the use of etiquette. In the elementary, as in the primary, we greet each child with a handshake and a "Good Morning, Julia," followed by, "It's nice to see you this morning," or "How was your weekend?" With this, we work on how to shake hands properly and the use of eye contact. You can role play this with the class as a small lesson, showing them examples of the wrong, as well as the right, way to do this. We also shake each child's hand at dismissal time, politely exchanging good-byes. This gives a sense of closure to the day and allows you to check back in with each child before he or she leaves.

We are always working on, "'May I please…?" and "Would you please…?", as well as "Thank you" and "You're welcome." Simple common etiquette is not difficult to have in your classroom if you act this way yourself and expect it of the children. It may take some time, but what a lovely outcome! With the excellent preparation our children receive in the young children's community (18 months to 3 years) and primary, or children's house (3 to 6 years) environments, the children who move into my 6 to 9 class already know the proper way to treat others. We always respect other people, their work and all living things.

We review, at the beginning of the year, how to roll a rug, hold and carry a bell, open and close a door, step aside so someone else can pass, carry a chair, and so on. The new children just in from primary are wonderful for these tasks, as they are still close to the end of the first plane, in which order is so highly valued. Then these are fresh in their minds, and when someone forgets to care for a material they will kindly remind that child of the proper way to do something or handle a material. We must aid those children who need help with speaking or reminding in a kind tone of voice. Sometimes children, such as those who have come from another school, need more help with these considerations. For example, when a child slams a drawer, I say, "Let's try that again please" in a positive tone of voice. But by the time they are nine years old, they are usually extremely thoughtful of everyone around them, whether it be in the group area, working on the floor or at a table.

When a child or two children choose to read a poem, play a song they have composed or present a report or piece of work to the class, all others are expected to sit quietly and give their attention to the children presenting, out of respect for them. When a child has a question for me, he or she must come and stand silently next to me, waiting until I have a free moment. When I am presenting a lesson to a group of children the others in the class know that they may not interrupt me or disturb anyone in the lesson. Again, this is out of respect for those learning something new and exciting. Occasionally though, a child will forget and come stand next to me with a question, and a child in the lesson will pipe up, "She's in a lesson!" We also discuss the concept of personal space as being an arm's length distance from one's body. This again shows respect for the people around you.

We have a dress code policy for both the children and the teachers. The purpose of this is to create in the children a sense of respect for the serious task we are undertaking at school. The children's shirts must be tucked in and their hands at their sides, rather than in their pockets. We do not have a uniform because we are helping instill in the children more responsibility and giving them the opportunity for good judgment, in having to choose their own clothes.

In our school, we have lunch together in our classroom. I eat with the children and stay with them the entire day. They do not leave the classroom for art, music or gym. I provide for these needs of the children myself, either inside the classroom or sometimes outdoors. This unbroken day gives the class cohesion, continuity, consistency and a real sense of community. Each child, beginning at the age of five in the *Casa dei Bambini*, makes and packs his or her own lunch. At the beginning of the school year, we have a class discussion on possibilities for healthy lunches. Lunch suggestions are also included in the school policies booklet for the parents. In addition, we help the parents with luncheon ideas in our continuing education sessions with them, which are scheduled throughout the year. We discuss the importance of low shelves for the child in the kitchen at home, helping children wash and chop vegetables, providing easy-open containers for lunch items and together making a weekly grocery list for the children's lunches.

Each child must pack a china plate, a glass or mug, a bowl, silverware, and a cloth napkin and place mat in a basket. Some of these items are breakable, and as you can imagine, they do sometimes break, but this is how the children learn to care for things in their world. They are seeing the natural consequences of their actions. They are also living in a real environment. As adults, we certainly do not eat our meals from plastic plates with plastic utensils, and neither should the children. After the children have set up their places for lunch, they are expected to sit quietly and wait for the others to do the same. When all are ready, one child reads a poem to the class and finishes with, "Have a nice lunch!" During lunch, the children are expected to follow proper table manners such as chewing with their mouths closed and keeping their elbows off the table. After they finish eating, they sweep their places and wash their table.

Another way in which we encourage graciousness in the elementary classroom is to help them strive for beauty in their work. They may decorate their work with a simple design down one side of the paper. I have some sample designs on cards in a box in the classroom to give them ideas on designs they may make. Ornamentation on their finished reports is a lovely way for them to feel that their work is special and very much their own. You can give them a lesson on illumination and show them examples of illuminated manuscripts from the Middle Ages, so that they may then illuminate their own work on occasion. Of course, they may illustrate their reports, time lines and stories. They may also learn to do calligraphy and Chinese writing; to make and marble paper; to bookbind or use ribbons to tie up their booklets; and to make charts or scrolls. With these small additions, the children have pride in their work, take care to do their very best and love making it beautiful.

Handwriting is of course a part of the appearance of their work. We can work on this in their journals, on final drafts of their reports and in all their work. I hear from parents that this must be the age of sloppiness, due to the appearance of their bedrooms, but beautiful handwriting should be a goal for all children. There is special handwriting paper to help those who need it, and we must make sure the children are using the pincer grip, holding their pencils with the proper three fingers. These things we can discuss at their individual meetings, which I have weekly unless an older child has shown himself to be motivated and hard working enough to need a meeting only every couple of weeks. Again, if they do their very best, they will have pride in their work and want to do it well.

Related to grace in the children's movements is their posture. They work at tables that seat four to six children, or at low tables which are thirteen inches from the floor and seat one or two children, or at a rug on the floor. When writing, they are encouraged to sit at a table so they may achieve their best handwriting. They are not allowed to lie on the floor, except occasionally during silent reading time. When they are sitting in a group together, they must sit with their hands in their laps and their legs crossed, not on their knees or with their feet out to the side or stretched in front of them. When they are sitting at tables, they are expected to sit up straight and have their feet flat on the floor. They are not allowed to lean on or across a table, either when they are sitting at a table or standing next to one. In the 9 to 12 class, they discuss the way in which one conveys his or her image to others, especially adults. We want to present ourselves as people who are confident, have poise, stand up straight and look someone in the eye.

On a child's birthday, we as a class make a "compliment book" for that child. In it is a page from each classmate with something nice about that child, something they particularly think is special about him or her. Some children have come up with "I like your shoes" or "You're cool," but we then discuss how to approach this, by thinking of some quality he or she admires about that child who is having a birthday. I include a page as well, and we make a cover with the child's name on it, decorated and tied with a ribbon. At the end of the day, we read through each compliment and give the small book to the child. It is not a collection of birthday cards, but a thoughtful way to focus on each child's special qualities and attributes. In thinking of others, as in caring for the environment, the children are encouraged to move away from self-centeredness.

It is so important to have high quality reading material in our classrooms. There is such a vast array of books today that the task of choosing appropriate ones for your children can be daunting. But if you go to your local library or book store, they often have lists of Caldecott and Newberry Award winners, as well as recommended reading lists. Do not resort to *Goosebumps* and *Baby-Sitters Club* series! We want to uplift the children's spirits and show them that there is goodness, beauty and excitement to be found in the world of reading. Stick with the classics – they are called classics for a reason. In addition, teach your children how to care for books, and share with them a love of words and a respect for the significance that words and literature hold. We can tell the children, "That is why it is so important to choose our words carefully, both in speaking and in writing."

When you read aloud to the children, choose books of all subjects and writing styles. Read a biography of Lincoln, then a fun story such as *Mr. Popper's Penguins*, followed by a selection of poetry, and then a story of courage such as *The Island of the Blue Dolphins*, followed by a fairy tale. Do also read the children *Mammolina* once, the story of Maria Montessori. When the children hear about the development of Montessori schools and materials, they are thrilled: "Oh! The sandpaper letters! I worked with those!" In addition, give them a silent reading time in your classroom. We have ours after lunch, which gives them time to become engrossed in their books before they go back to work in the afternoon. This special time shows that each child deserves to be given the occasion and space to let his or her imagination go. It shows respect for this very special undertaking. The resources for reading are endless, but we must search carefully for quality. Think how much we can give to the children's imaginations and literary experiences in a period of three years in our classrooms. In their trips to the library, we are giving them the opportunity to use good judgment in having to choose from an entire library of books rather than from just the classroom's small collection.

As well as enriching their minds with good books, we must provide them with an environment that is beautiful and simple. The white walls should be adorned with only a few beautiful pieces of art or prints, framed very simply. I have found nice quality prints of famous paintings on calendars or on postcards from art museums. I then frame them in the glass clip frames you can find in many stores. The children also enjoy reading a poem I have on the wall, with an illustration, which I change every so often. Make sure that everything you choose to put on your classroom's walls is hung at the children's eye level. We also have our class photo framed and hung up, as well as a photo of Dr. Montessori.

The children's care of the environment is also a wonderful way to bring grace and courtesy into the elementary classroom. In having them take responsibility for their own classroom, by doing jobs, taking care of the plants and animals in the classroom and cleaning up after themselves, they come to respect the environment in which they spend their days, realizing that if they do not, it will not be there, for them or anyone else, the way they want it to be. This gives them a sense of ownership of the environment and ties them to it. They learn that they need to leave things in an orderly fashion. For example, during the winter the children line up their boots in the coat closet in the classroom. They clip their boots together so they don't get separated. They also clip their mittens with one of the clothespins that we keep in a basket on a shelf in the closet. They hang up their coats and jackets on hangers, and I show them how to fold their sweaters properly.

At the beginning of the school year, we make a job board, listing those tasks which we all agree need to be done. It hangs in the classroom, along with a clothespin for each child. The clips with their names on them get rotated around the board, so they each have a different job each week. There is an inspector who goes around the room during job time at the end of the day to make sure the jobs have been done well. One of the jobs is holding the door at the end of the day when we all leave the classroom, and as we pass that person, we say, "Thank you, Jack" or "Thank you, Erin."

In the 9-12 class the inspectors run weekly class meetings, using proper meeting formalities. The children in that class write their concerns in a book throughout the week. Then, on Friday morning, the two inspectors voice the concerns, there is a discussion, and all the children then vote. Children are concerned not only with the physical environment, but also with the emotional and social environment. So their concerns often deal with how someone is being treated, or if the same people are consistently going outside to play together to the exclusion of others. These concerns are always discussed anonymously, and since they are now older, they come to each other for the solutions, rather than going to the teacher.

Grace and beauty can also be expressed in music and dance. As the adult in the classroom environment, we need to tend to the spiritual needs of the child. We do this with music, art, religion and all things beautiful. These are forms of communication, a natural human tendency, here spoken in the language of the spirit. In music, the children learn to sing, compose and write music, and identify musical styles and composers. This is not difficult to do in the classroom with a small collection of CDs or tapes. On a regular basis, we listen to classical music, which touches the soul. I play it in the background during the children's arrival in the morning, as well as during their silent reading time occasionally. At other times we listen to and interpret a certain composer's use of different techniques, dynamics or instruments. The children love to talk about how Bach's *Toccata and Fugue in D minor* made them feel, or try to pick out the harp in Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake*. They also like comparing different pieces of music and choosing their favorites. We sometimes draw abstractly while we are listening to music, trying to follow the sounds of a composition.

In addition, music is incorporated into movement, dancing, rhythm and listening exercises. We do exercises indoors in the winter, such as stretching, walking or marching to different beats, or moving to different music. We also do some dances that are from a variety of nations and combine singing with dancing done in circles. The elementary children love these because they are done in a group and because they are fun and beautiful. They bring out peaceful, cooperative behavior in the children.

We want them to respect everything as beautiful. Work can and should be joyful. Celebrate the simple pleasures of life with them. One October day it began snowing in the middle of our day at school while we were working. It was the first snow of the season, and soon every child had discovered it and was in awe of its beauty and newness. We gathered around the windows and I read poetry on snow:

> The more it
> SNOWS-tiddely-pom,
> The more it
> GOES-tiddely-pom
> The more it
> GOES-tiddely-pom
> On
> Snowing.

And nobody
KNOWS-tiddely-pom,
How cold my
TOES-tiddely-pom
How cold my
TOES-tiddely-pom
Are
Growing.[10]

Then we sat quietly for a minute looking out and one asked, "Could we go outside and do a snow dance?" So they joined hands in small groups and danced in circles together. It was a small piece of beauty, inspired by the nature of the child to discover and embrace the divine.

Bring in the spiritual whenever possible. In the autumn, collect leaves with the children; then do leaf rubbings, classification, collages and artwork. In the springtime, go out and examine the miracle of new life in nature. Help them to appreciate the beauty surrounding them in their everyday lives.

We must make sure that the idea of respect for all extends to the outdoor environment. Take the children on nature walks to observe the beauty around them. When you go to the park with them, take some time to lie on your backs, in silence looking up at the sun streaming through the leaves; close your eyes and listen to the leaves rustling and the birds singing. Take it all in. On the last day of each school year, we take a walk to the lake and read poetry in anticipation of summer. We then look out at the lake and each child (who has brought along a clipboard, pencil and white piece of paper) draws or writes a poem or story. It is an extremely peaceful time for us, to be together while each being alone. It brings us together at the close of the year with a sense of the importance of community and a recollection of the special qualities of each other. It also reminds us of the great gifts we have and makes us grateful.

You can do many things outside. When the weather is pleasant the children take turns eating out on our classroom patio, four at a time, or we go to the park as a class and have lunch there. Sometimes we have silent reading time outside, or read-aloud time at the end of the day. The children who are responsible enough may also work outside when the weather permits. We dance and sing outside and do our physical exercises outdoors when the climate is right.

Space permitting, gardening is a wonderful thing for the children to do outdoors as well. Our 9 to 12 class plants a garden in the spring with vegetables and flowers, and the children who come to summer session tend to it. They grow foods and herbs they then use in the preparation of their Thanksgiving meal together. They also dry the mint and lavender and make and embroider sachets filled with these sweet smelling herbs.

At the end of the school year the elementary children put on a musical which is held in a theater nearby. One of the things they are taught during the workshop leading up to the performance is that we must show respect to those we applaud. The cheering and hooting that goes on at a basketball game is not appropriate for a place such as the opera or the ballet. Our director explains to the children that applause and an occasional "Bravo!" is all that is needed to show another that you appreciate his or her fine work.

Going Out gives the children the opportunity to use grace and courtesy in public. In their local outings to the library or pet store they come into contact with other adults. In making their arrangements for a long distance *Going Out* excursion they make phone calls to museums for information on times, prices and directions. They might also need to call to get train or bus schedules, or a chaperone or driver for their outing. I role play the phone calls before they make them, so they are better prepared when they speak to an unknowing adult on the other end and so they may practice their phone etiquette. Once they do go out they will have ample opportunities to use courteous behavior with every individual and exhibit they encounter.

The 9 to 12 class is encouraged to do some community service. One possibility is volunteering their time at a home for the elderly. Here, they can use their compassion to deeply learn the meaning of respect for older human beings, which is so sorely missing in today's society. They are forced to slow down, take time to listen and open themselves up to others' needs. These are valuable lessons that all children should learn.

What is the merit of all this? In the past we have had a few children come in from other schools which are non-Montessori, and their parents tell us they are now more relaxed and less distressed. We think this outcome is the result, at least in part, of the respect and the courtesy we show to each other. In other environments a child might be accosted by other children getting in his or her personal space; he might be emotionally insulted or even physically hurt. There are the pressures of deadlines and assignments, due dates and timed exercises. In a true Montessori environment the children are respected above all else. We give them ways to solve problems in social situations so they are more at peace with themselves and with others. A Montessori classroom should be an enjoyable place to come every morning, for both the children and the adult.

Besides assisting in their learning of these specific values, how do we help the children to be more gracious and courteous? We use humor in the elementary classroom. We are always trying to help the children find their own solutions to problems. A child may say, "There's no chair for me to sit on at this table." I answer with, "Hmm! What are you going to do about that?" The child usually responds with a smile and goes to get one. Or: "My pencil's too short. I need a new one." I say, "How interesting!" The child usually waits a moment and then wanders off. She frequently comes back in a bit, with "May I please have a new pencil?" Some children need a little more guidance, and so I will help lead them to the question they want to ask.

Another example of our use of humor: We had just had a lesson in the morning on telling time. That afternoon a child approached me and, perhaps out of habit, asked, "What time is it?" I then responded: "I don't know. Why don't you check the clock or your watch," or "Didn't we just have that lesson?" "Oh yes," (with a big smile) and he excitedly went off to figure it out.

We must help the children solve problems using kindness and respect. They need specific ideas on *how to* remedy social difficulties. I think we sometimes forget that children need to be shown how to do things. If we observe and listen to the child he will show us what he needs. In the six to nine class we give the children techniques for this. For example, when two or three children are having a hard time getting along and it is interfering with their work, give them a little time to try to work it out on their own. Then, if they are not progressing in a positive manner, go over and ask each side to describe the problem. Then ask what they could say or do to fix the problem. If they cannot express it, tell them how. Later, in the nine to twelve class, the children are expected to work things out for themselves without so much teacher intervention. We must act as role models, being ourselves the way we want them to be.

This year I had five girls who were the oldest in the class. They got a bit cliquish, choosing to work only with each other to the exclusivity of the younger children. So I took the five of them out of the classroom for a little meeting one day. I suggested the idea of writing a list of all the children in the class and making a point of working with each one of them before the end of the school year. I told them, "You'll learn things about others you never knew and find out that they each possess their own wonderful qualities." I said it could be a kind of secret (this they loved!), each one discreetly making a list and keeping it in the back of her journal or in her drawer. What happened was almost magical… When they did reach out and work with other children, the young ones were thrilled, almost starry-eyed. The older children in the class also set good examples, as they worked with the younger ones, by using good work habits and concentration. Here again, this experience was raising their awareness of others and their needs.

In helping them solve problems or resolve conflicts, some children naturally pick up appropriate ways to do this. Others need exact words and methods for doing this. So you must figure out what a child needs and act accordingly. We must also remember that the elementary child now has a reasoning mind, so we can appeal to his use of reason in helping him to solve problems. Because this is such a social age for the children, they naturally fall into group work as part of the environment and so must learn how to interact graciously with others.

One other very important idea we must convey to the children is the value of teamwork over individual achievement. They should see the classroom as a community. It is, after all, a microcosm of society. So in their treatment of others they must remember that though they may not like everyone in the class (as they probably will not like everyone they meet in life), they still have a responsibility to treat them with respect because they are human beings. In the classroom each child is a part of the whole. The Golden Rule is always applicable. One of our classroom rules this year was, "Treat others the way you would like to be treated."

The child from six to twelve years of age is compassionate. If a child is feeling left out of a group I try to facilitate that child's inclusion, perhaps by asking a particularly sensitive child to invite the other to join his or her group for work or lunch. Sometimes we see a beautiful moment in which a child does this on his own, acting from a natural response to seeing another in need.

The idea of teamwork comes into play in the children's group work. Human beings need to work as a team. The early human beings on the earth would not have gotten very far without each other. The children must realize that we all need each other. Their characteristic of doing great work would not be achievable without the help of others. Think of times when the children in your classroom were enveloped in a piece of great work, whether it was research on the Incas or squaring a quadranomial. It certainly was not being done alone. Their most exciting and fulfilling work and their greatest learning experiences come out of work done with others.

Teamwork is also essential when our nine to twelve class goes to the park to play sports. Each player on a team needs an awareness of and respect for the others on his or her own team and on the other team. Without these the team falls apart and cannot function as a whole. They try to maintain a balance,. making sure all the children are invested in the game while keeping a reasonable level of competition. There are still important lessons to be learned on sportsmanship, winning and losing, but this idea of process over product is a crucial one, in the classroom with their work, as well as on the playing field.

We have found at our school that grace and courtesy underlie everything in the classroom environment. When the elements of politeness, gentility and kindness are present, every other aspect comes together in harmony. This means that as directors we must attend to the minor details that might, on the surface, appear to be inconsequential. Every single time a drawer is slammed shut or a chair is banged loudly we must make eye contact with the child or say lightly, "Let's try that again!" Though this might seem an endless task for us, the children eventually learn. Some of the older children simply need to have their name called and they will automatically do whatever it is again. We cannot allow courteous behavior to slip for a single moment, or the *children* will let it slip. We must understand that consistency lays the foundation for proper behavior.

Of course none of this is possible unless we ourselves are fulfilled and happy in our own work. We must each devote time and effort to becoming the kind of person we want the children to see and imitate. One way we do this at our school is to have a two-hour faculty meeting each week. The first hour is spent discussing school business, while the second hour is devoted to a book discussion led by one of the directors. This time together brings out so much about each of us, our experiences in the classroom that week, our successes and failures with the children. We share personal and professional ideas and thoughts, listening to and respecting the various contributions each of us brings to the school, and it bonds us together as a community. On the outside it seems like a lot of time from your daily schedule, but in fact, it is a very important factor in making us the kind of teachers and human beings we want to be.

These ideas with children work. Change does not happen instantly, but gradually, with consistent effort on the director's part. Children rise to the occasion if given expectation, opportunity and support. Attention to the details of grace and courtesy transform every classroom into a beautiful, living reality. And think of the benefits for the children who come out of an environment such as this! Think of the effect they will have on those around them in later life if they have internalized these values... and the contribution they will be able to make to the future of humanity! Let us not forget what Emerson wrote: "Life is not so short but that there is always time enough for courtesy."[11] ❖

Laura Smyczek received her B.A. in art history at the University of Dallas and did graduate work at the University of Notre Dame. She obtained her AMI elementary diploma from the Montessori Institute of Milwaukee. She currently teaches a 6-9 class at Forest Bluff School in Illinois.

NOTES

[1] Michel de Montaigne, "The Ceremony of the Interview of Princes," *The Works of Michel de Montaigne*: Essays trans. Charles Cotton, rev. William C. Hazlitt (New York: Edwin C. Hill, 1910), 154.

[2] Maria Montessori, "Every Unnecessary Help Is an Obstacle to the Child's Development," reprinted in *AMI Communications*, no. 4 (1994), 11.

[3] Maria Montessori, "The Call of Education," vol. II, no. IV, Dec. 1925, reprinted *in AMI Communications*, no. 4 (1995), 16.

[4] Maria Montessori, *To Educate the Human Potential* (Madras, India: Kalakshetra Press, 1991), 26.

[5] Montessori Institute of Milwaukee Training Course, 1993-94.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Ibid.

[10] A.A. Milne, *The World of Pooh* (New York: Dutton Children's Books, 1985), 161.

[11] Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Letters and Social Aims* (Cambridge, MA: The Riverside Press, 1875), 85.

A Montessori Erdkinder Program, Practical Considerations

Peter Gebhardt-Seele, Ph.D.

PREFACE

We have reason for gratitude. When Maria Montessori drafted the *Erdkinder* Model in the late 1930s, it was not implemented. In the 1970s the idea of the Urban Compromise came up (s. Camillo Grazzini's verdict at this conference in *A Montessori Community for Adolescents*). It made the implementation of a real *erdkinder* school even more unlikely. A few years ago at the conference in Chicago my lecture was *Why not Consider Erdkinder?* At that time it was still considered utopian. Today we talk seriously about *Practical Considerations*! We have come a long way!

Why was I chosen to speak about this? Was it because I grew up on a small farm in the foothills of the Bavarian Alps? Was it because I went to high school in a *Landerziehungsheim*, a similar school model in Germany contemporary to Maria Montessori? Was it because I worked with adolescents for 12 years in a traditional high school? Maybe it was because, as a trainer, I should know these things. But with the *erdkinder* plan we are all in new territory.

Maria Montessori's *From Childhood to Adolescence* is my main source. Page numbers in parentheses relate to this source, the second Schocken Books edition. Further, I draw on (for this conference) Camillo Grazzini's work, *A Montessori Community for Adolescents*. But many conclusions are based on intense discussions among trainers and practitioners and on my looking back into my own feelings and experiences as an *erdkind*.

A word of clarification on the **language**: *adolescents* sounds stilted; *children* is no more correct at this age level. The American language has an expression: *kids*. But that sounds too colloquial. I will use Maria Montessori's term: *erdkinder*. It's a plural, meaning "the landchildren." The singular is *erdkind*.

Implementing the *Erdkinder* Model is burdened with unease and anxiety. It is true, we are walking on uncharted land. But what is the risk? The traditional high school serves our children miserably. We can do only better. There is no risk of doing worse. If we understand self-construction to provide for *optimal* development, then our task is merely to *follow the child*, to lovingly observe the *erdkinder* and modify the environment until it serves the developmental needs of the adolescent. As far as our trust in Montessori is concerned, her advice served us well for our 3-6 year olds and for our elementary classes. Why not trust her with our 12-18 year olds?

There is trepidation that the time may not be ripe. The time is never ripe. It wasn't any riper when Maria Montessori started her first class in San Lorenzo. Her project was not an easy one, not one planned in all detail or generally appreciated. She drew harsh criticism; she was called upon to provide a more structured, less easygoing regimen. And most of what we use as a model for a primary class today was discovered by Maria Montessori as she went along with the existing class, rather than before children were admitted.

BASIC ELEMENTS OF THE ERDKINDER PROGRAM

The Farm

The farm is the integral element of an *Erdkinder* School. Maria Montessori points to some of its essentials (p. 105): "quiet surroundings... close to nature... open-air life... nontoxic diet..." This characterizes her idea of such a "center for study and work."

There are important educational factors in adolescents working a farm:

- ***Physical labor*** is important from ages 12-18 years. The discovery of strength is a joyful experience. That indicates the need for heavy physical work.
- ***Economic independence*** is the independence to be developed at this age. It is closely related to growing and harvesting crops. Such independence may not be gained entirely, but as a token (p. 102/3).
- Experiencing the ***creative abundance of nature***, the mystery of growth, the joy of eating your own harvest, is a healing factor. Experiencing the food basis of humanity in agriculture was considered a most important part of understanding history for Maria Montessori. It is still so today, maybe even more so; if the numbers of the Worldwatch Institute (Washington, DC) are true, we may in the near future realize that the limits of fertile soil will show, in a disastrous way, how important that food basis is for the increasing world population.
- Maria Montessori looks at a ***holistic environment*** as an important factor (p. 105): "Life in the open air, in the sunshine ... the calm surroundings, the silence, the wonder of nature satisfy the need of the adolescent mind for reflection and meditation."
- Adolescents yearn for ***the opportunity to be alone***, to be able to walk in a grove of maple trees or just out in the solitude of a hillside.
- ***Beauty*** is important. The farm may have rolling hills, woods, creeks, ponds...
- Even the ***"nontoxic diet"*** is considered in the context of the farm (p. 105).

What kind of farm describes Maria Montessori's vision? At her time and place the prevailing farm was what we would call a family farm: mixed farming, animal husbandry, poultry, bees, both dairy cows and cattle, horses; limited size, so a family could run it; low technology. The site of the farm is seen to be in driving distance from the city (1-2 hours), not in a suburb and close to, but not immediately integrated in, a village or town.

The Living Community

Boarding for the *erdkinder* and the live-in staff is another of the basic elements of this model. "During the difficult time of adolescence it is helpful to leave the accustomed environment of the family..." (p. 105) "The whole order of the daily life can be made to suit the demands of study and work, whereas the routine of family life has first to conform to the needs of the parents." (p. 106)

Togetherness is important for adolescents. They want to explore: *Who am I? Who are you?* Moral issues are important, issues of social life and issues of sexuality. The work is integrated into the course of the day. Commuting would take too many hours away from the day and would require a highly structured schedule that is counterproductive for adolescents. Life on the land is what is intended, not merely a few work hours, but an immersion in the rural rhythm. The exchange of ideas needs unscheduled opportunities. There must be facilities for community activities (s. next section), for get-togethers, a community room with a huge fireplace, facilities for sports and for outings.

One of Maria Montessori's remarkable ideas is the hostel. It is seen as being built by the *erdkinder* themselves, for visiting teachers and experts, for visiting parents, as an opportunity for construction work and planning and economic enterprise.

Economics

A store or shop is set up in the nearby town (p. 109) to sell the products of the farm or the craft work made by the group. It provides an opportunity to experience the economic interrelationships of expenses, price, demand, income and profit, and an opportunity to contact people and to serve the community.

The *erdkinder* are to be involved in the management of farm, residence, hostel and craft shop. This is seen as part of gaining economic independence, developing knowledge and skills in bookkeeping, watching cashflow and experiencing responsible decision making.

Creativity: Arts, Music, Poetry, Drama, Dance

Self-expression provides an important involvement for adolescents, an outlet for emotional growth, an opportunity for emotional awareness. (p. 115) Necessary facilities include a stage; a studio for painting, molding clay and woodcarving; a piano, other instruments and insulated rooms for practicing music.

Craftwork

Construction work of the *erdkinder* may include but not be limited to building the hostel, some of the farm buildings and some of other structures. The purpose is again a step toward independence and an opportunity for gross motor activity.

Technical tinkering may include repairing machinery and cars, disassembling machines or building one's own constructions. Maria Montessori lists this opportunity under the academic subject *physics*. Needed is a repair shop with tools and basic machinery, a "museum of machinery" (p. 117). The same good reasons apply here as did for physical work: the adolescents' bent towards work with the hands, their drive towards practical work. But this is especially important since it provides the bridge, the entry into the work of science and technology.

Arts and crafts shall be listed in this section too. They were discussed in more detail in the previous section, *Creativity*.

Moral Education

Maria Montessori (p. 116) considers moral education an important issue, but she does not provide details particular to the third plane of development. Philosophy and ethics should be part of the curriculum. For meditation, a quiet room should be available. In dealing with religion, an open, tolerant, loving atmosphere is important. Objective information about religion should be part of the curriculum, as should be the opportunity to connect with religious communities, e.g. local churches.

Discipline

Maria Montessori suggests that there be enough freedom within limits and rules (p. 113): "a fundamental order in the succession of occupations during the day... just those rules that are necessary to maintain order and ensure progress, enough freedom to allow them to act on individual initiative."

The graduate from a well working elementary class will have the required self-discipline. At this point it may be necessary to remind ourselves not to imagine these *erdkinder* as the adolescents of regular high schools. Only applicants from Montessori schools may be considered.

Sexuality is an important issue at this age. It is difficult to live against the prevailing values of our society. In most movies sexual encounter follows the first day of acquaintance. The *erdkinder* community should develop a better understanding of sexuality. But what is the right code of ethics? We must carefully explore and discuss the values of the parents, but also ourselves be comfortable with the rules governing the community. The model of A.S. Neill in Sumerhill may not be suitable to attract parents. But burdening the *erdkinder* with guilt may not be suitable either. While the topic is difficult, it cannot be left untouched.

Academics

The issue of academics is important in discussing the project (p. 99), but it may not be the overriding focus. The guideline, as in all Montessori schools, is the *erdkind*'s developmental needs. We have to consider the adolescent's characteristic of fewer intellectual interests. And there shouldn't be too much concern: Montessori elementary graduates should be ahead of regular curricula. If the primary and elementary class was working as Montessori envisioned it, using the power of the 3-6's absorbent mind and the 6-12's reasoning mind to master all that is in the album, the *erdkind* is then well prepared to spend some time on something other than academics.

In discussing curricular contents Maria Montessori (p. 111) provides no detailed curriculum. She maintains that it should be developed based on experience with the adolescents themselves. She does warn that the course of study should not be restricted by curricula of regular secondary schools.

Her list is somewhat unusual, but in effect it renders the classical list. The following sequence follows her listing:

- Self-expression and moral education have been mentioned.

- Mathematics (p. 116) is a long paragraph.
- With regard to language, Maria Montessori – and our present day social situation! – makes a point for several languages. We know that learning a second language should start in the sensitive period of 3-6 years. But it certainly should be part of the offer to the *erdkinder*.

Further fields of study listed by Maria Montessori are "the study of the earth and living things (p. 117): Geology, geography, self expression, biology, cosmology... physiology (anatomy), astronomy." Interestingly, under "study of human progress and ...civilization (p. 117): physics, chemistry, mechanics, engineering, genetics" are listed. Finally "history" is listed.

With regard to methods it is no surprise, but must carefully be considered, that Maria Montessori (p. 111) warns us not to use methods of existing secondary schools.

Shall there be classes? In Latin *classis* means "fleet." Here we discuss lessons for groups beyond three or five students. Many adolescent programs have reintroduced larger size classes; is that in tune with the adolescent's needs? The Montessori theory for the elementary level requires small groups. The whole class is the rare exception. Is the need of the adolescent really different here?

Are materials still a successful way to work? For mathematics Maria Montessori (p. 116) calls for "special methods" and "plenty of apparatus." The elementary materials may not be suitable for this age. Do we have to design suitable materials?

Projects, exemplary learning and individual studies seem to be Maria Montessori's favorite methods. (p. 119) Such methods call for stimuli by the expert, but then the *erdkind's* own work takes over, individually or in small groups. In the elementary class, children develop responsibility and ownership of the process of learning. The *erdkind* should be ready to face society's standard of knowledge and decide on their own how to go about acquiring it.

Outings

All the elementary characteristics of going-out may still be valid, now with a wider range and more responsibility. But besides trips connected to research there is a need for adventure, for physical challenges: mountain climbing, whitewater rafting, wilderness exploration. There are experiences in summer camps which we can use, e.g. courses in which adolescents build boats and use them to navigate the ocean. The idea is not to copy such programs but to derive a gauge for what is possible and how to achieve it in a cautious way.

IMPLEMENTATION

The Beginning

The following list envisions the final stage. Not all structures are there from the outset. The *erdkinder* should have the opportunity to plan, construct, build and organize the hostel, a barn, extensions of the residence. Farm operations might, in the beginning, be laid out to a minimum so that they can be expanded. The number of simultaneously visiting teachers and parents may be restricted for a while until the hostel is built. The shop may start in rented space or as a stand in the farmers market.

The Farm

The size should be large enough to provide labor for about 20 *erdkinder* and a master farmer, but small enough to avoid the industrial atmosphere of agribusiness. Production may be laid out to provide mixed farming: dairy cows or goats; crops such as potatoes, corn,wheat, produce and vegetables; wool from sheep; chicken (hopefully free ranging); and raising honey, among others. The issue of slaughter for meat must be discussed. It might be better not to start with cattle ranching, but with slaughtering the chicken as part of the operation.

Farming methods may require primarily manual labor with the help of horses and oxen, and with limited use of a tractor. Amish farming might be a good model, not as a principle, but as a way to provide enough work for so many people and to stay closer to the historical context, which is one of the reasons to choose farming for this level of education. Organic farming might fit the educational intentions but is not a necessary principle.

The Residence

Boarding for the *erdkinder* requires rooms, 2-3 persons each, for sleeping and personal studies, with separate wings or stories for boys and girls, a community room – large, comfortable, rustic, with a big fireplace, a stage and piano – study rooms, rooms for music practice, rooms for small group lessons and two washrooms as multiple facilities, one in each wing or story.

The residence for the live-in staff may be close to, but separated from, the *erdkinder* rooms and should be flexible for changing staff situations – singles, couple(s), family(ies) with children. Besides bedrooms there must be private living rooms or efficiencies for each unit.

The outdoors must include a garden for flowers and vegetables, a pool and sports facilities.

The Shops and Studios

A shop for construction and machine repair should include a tool box, a work bench, a heavy vise, machines such as a drill, welding set, circular saw and a collection of machinery (the "museum of machinery", p. 117) to be taken apart and reassembled. Shops for arts and crafts may include an art studio, a shop for pottery and one for wood working.

The Store

Its location should be within easy driving distance – 30 minutes – of a nearby town. The managing *erdkinder* needs to commute there every day. It might be integrated into a farmers' market. Its size might be as small as one rented room or a stand in the beginning, but it may be expanded, through the *erdkinders'* efforts, to having its own building. The inventory would be the products of the farm and the *erdkinders'* own arts and craft work. A limited choice of other products might be discussed. With regard to profits, there would have to be an understanding, before operation starts, of who has rights to whatever profit is gained in the operation. The *erdkinder* own the store. But if there is profit beyond expenses, some of it must go to the producers – the farm and the art shop, and some of it must go toward the *erdkinders'* upkeep, but some of it must remain theirs to spend!

The *Erdkinder*

Age is an important issue: Maria Montessori discusses the *erdkinder* model with the full range of 12-18 year-old students in mind. However, the major problems in maladjustment of regular high schools to the needs of adolescents occur during the ages of 12-15 years. Most energy, therefore, has been spent on settings for that age group. This age also is more intensely discussed as to characteristics and needs. So many schools start with a program limited to 12-15 year olds. But limiting the program to the 12-15 year-olds will eliminate the stabilizing effect of the older *erdkinder*. They are more able to do independent work, thus setting a model. They will also set a model in taking responsibility for planning, economic decisions, etc. As in all Montessori schools, there should be a mix of at least three years of age, but it is recommended that the whole plane of development be served.

The number in the program is determined by both economic and educational factors. It must be large enough so that a reasonable tuition may cover expenses, but small enough to allow for natural interaction. An *erdkinder* community should not experience the anonymity of a college campus. If the number is too small, dynamics of social interaction will be limited. About 15-20 *erdkinder* are frequently discussed; for economic reasons about 30 might be better and still not be too many.

The selection of the finally enrolled *erdkinder* needs careful consideration. Only graduates of well working Montessori elementary programs should be taken. This is a necessity in view of the demands on responsibility, inner discipline, work habits and level of academic knowledge. Many discussions of the *Erdkinder* Model have negative results because 'regular' kids, as experienced in junior high school, are envisioned as the potential students. But the Montessori graduate is different. The *erdkinder* program may require a careful revision of the preceding *casa* and elementary levels: the enormous intellectual capacity at the second plane of development must be used and fed. All exercises in the teacher's album must be presented, touching each child each day in a small group. A second language should be started in the *casa* and elementary classes.

The powerful potential for inclusion of special children in a Montessori adolescent program must be recognized. However, for the initial project it is advisable to enroll only students without such major problems (s. Camillo Grazzini).

The Staff

Live-in staff provides the main personal contact for the students, but is not necessarily determined as the farmer, teacher or any particular specialist. If 168 hours/week (7x24) of duty are to be covered, four staff members at 42 hours each are needed. With suitable scheduling they can also cover some of the needed expertise and professional activities. Pure supervising tasks may be covered by college students or volunteers.

Maria Montessori proposes "a married couple, house father and house mother, who would develop a moral and protective influence..." (p. 120). The calculation above would ask for two couples.

Visiting teachers and experts supplement the staff expertise. That may include teachers with certification for particular subjects not covered by the live-in staff, experts for crafts or construction, artists, musicians or scientists. Even the farm expert may be a visiting person, though that might bring about problems.

The necessary expertise to be covered must include: farming, crafts, e.g. construction, mechanical and arts, music, dance, acting/directing, store management and high school certification for the subjects listed above.

The intensity of staff activity is an important cost factor. Academic visiting staff members may not necessarily work full time. Subject experts may take turns. Not all subjects may be actively taught at all times. If a subject pauses, the students may choose to carry on working on their own. The role of the adult is to create interest, open issues to be studied, provide an environment of available information and guide the students' studies. Live-in staff with expertise in mathematics, physics,language and history might be desirable but not mandatory. Craft and gardening experts may be retired persons who choose to work along at their leisure, with the *erdkinder* joining them in the shop.

The Calendar

Maria Montessori deemed it "not necessary to resort to *holidays*, which are a waste of time and break the continuity of life." Holidays "...are simply a change of occupation and surroundings, and this can be provided by a variety of occupations and interests." (p. 111) A calendar without vacations assumes that life and work is so in tune with the *horme*, that it is not felt as a burden. This provides additional time, balancing the total of academic and non-academic activities.

Individual leaves on an irregular schedule may still be allowed for family trips, study excursions or visits. Such leaves would preferably not be taken in summer, which is the most busy and interesting time on a farm.

PREPARATION

Research

Camillo Grazzini has produced a list of research efforts he deems necessary. The Montessori Teacher Education Collaborative (MTEC) has launched a project to collect experiences with adolescents, modeled after Maria Montessori's work in the *Casa dei Bambini*. She recognized the profound transformation of *normalization* that took place every time a child became deeply involved in work. She then used this observation to identify materials and situations that were helpful toward promoting such deep involvement, thus creating the *prepared environment*. MTEC's study will try to provide a similar collection of experiences, situations which help the adolescence to be drawn into deep involvement. In modern terms, such experiences, where *flow* is experienced, will then become the elements of a prepared adolescent environment.

Teacher Training

Camillo Grazzini states that "training is not necessary." Upon closer consideration, we may recognize that training as we know it from AMI primary or elementary training is not possible. The major difficulty there deals with presenting materials. For the *erdkinder* there are no materials yet. The expertise required for an *erdkinder* project is not specific to Montessori and must be acquired at college or by apprenticeship. But the person working in an *erdkinder* program needs preparation for the particular philosophy and methods. Necessary preparation must include a certain amount of knowledge of Montessori theory, including a profound understanding of the idea of self-construction, of the control of the *horme*, of the understanding and importance of work and of the four planes of development.

In addition, some basic knowledge of the work in the *casa* and elementary classes is necessary, just as the elementary teacher needs some understanding of the work in the *Casa dei Bambini*. The preparatory course as required for elementary students would provide such an overview for the first plane. An analogue preparatory course summing up the essence of the elementary course would provide the same for the second plane. Particular emphasis should be given to the late elementary work: clause analysis, biological classification, climate and plate tectonics, cube roots, algebra, and formulas for area and volume.

A profound study of Montessori's theory for adolescents would be a must, in particular of the *Erdkinder* Model as the prepared environment for the third plane. Such study might further include the state of experiments and discussions so far, the strategies for adolescent learning (s. section on *methods*) and the materials as developed so far.

A broad view on contemporary adolescent psychology and physiology might be considered prerequisite, as well as a basic knowledge of the *erdkinder* activities such as farming, gardening, economics, construction and crafts work. The person working in an *erdkinder* program needs a basic knowledge of the academic curriculum, including curriculum outlines for all subjects, and a preparation of one's own subject in view of the different learning strategies. Even the academic teachers should have basic experience in creative activities, e.g. art, music, poetry, drama and dance.

Training courses should be organized in modules, adaptable to the different needs of holders of different AMI teacher diplomas, of high school teachers certified for particular subjects, of experts in farming, construction, arts, of volunteers and of any combinations of the above. Such training courses must be directed under AMI supervision, employing AMI trainers and staff with the diverse expertises necessary.

CONCLUSION

The *Erdkinder* Model is drafted by Maria Montessori in its basic features. It still needs many details to be worked out. This cannot be done at a desk. The best chance is a living project, where the actual *erdkinder* are participating in the development of the model, where they are observed under the conditions of the model and where variations and new details can immediately be tested. This was Maria Montessori's way of designing the methodology of the *Casa dei Bambini*.

A list of detail issues may provide a feeling of inadequacy. But the task does not have to be more overwhelming than to start a family – a task for which none of us has training other than that which nature has provided. In starting an *Erdkinder* Model, we must also keep in mind that the active *horme* of the adolescents will be a strong guide. ❖

Peter Gebhardt Seele, Ph.D., is an AMI elementary trainer at the Washington Montessori Institute, holding AMI elementary and special education diplomas. He has a degree in engineering, a Ph.D. in economics, has worked in computer applications and authored the book, *The Computer and the Child, A Montessori Approach*.

The Gift of Grace and Courtesy: Revealing the Normalized Community

Mary Lou Cobb

I would like to begin by thanking AMI/USA for inviting me to speak today. The fact that I have been asked to speak at a conference that is dedicated to Mario Montessori is an enormous honor. I had the great privilege of meeting Mr. Montessori when I was just a trainee in Washington in 1964. A few years later, Miss Stephenson asked me to drive Mr. Montessori to and from the airport at a conference held in Washington that particular spring. I will always treasure my time with him, uninterrupted, as we went from place to place in my yellow V.W. Beetle! He was a gentle man – full of grace and wisdom. I can't help but believe that he is listening in today, and I hope that I can make him proud.

The topic I wish to speak about is the *Gift of Grace and Courtesy: Revealing the Normalized Community.* I will attempt to define what is meant by grace and courtesy and then to answer the question: Are grace and courtesy outdated? I will conclude by showing the relevance of grace and courtesy in developing partnerships with students, parents, teachers, boards and the community – in creating a normalized school community.

Grace comes from the Latin word *gratia*, meaning "charm, favor, thanks." *Webster's International Dictionary* defines grace as:

- a free gift of God to man for his regeneration or sanctification;
- a state of acceptance with a being pleasing to God: enjoyment of divine favor <be in a state of grace>;
- a virtue of moral excellence regarded as coming from God;
- a disposition to kindness, favor, clemency, or compassion.

Courtesy is simply defined as: "well mannered conduct indicative of respect for or consideration of others."

Montessori's vision of the normalized child...achieved through grace and courtesy

After years of observing and working with children, Dr. Montessori came to see that the child longs to become a respected member of his family and, ultimately, of the society to which he has been born. In order to do so, he needs to learn what is considered appropriate behavior, whether it be in his family, his school or his community. With this in mind, Dr. Montessori developed lessons in grace and courtesy: how to greet someone; how to make a person feel comfortable, to include: how to open the door, offer to take care of someone's belongings; how to serve food or drink; how to have an intelligent conversation; how to have polite table manners; how to pass; how to wait one's turn, whether it be in conversation or in line for groceries.

I could go on and on, but the point I want to make is that the child wants and needs to be included and to take his place in society. If he is to do so in a positive manner, then we need to instruct him as to what is acceptable or not acceptable behavior. Dr. Montessori incorporated the lessons of grace and courtesy into the classroom because she had as her ultimate goal educating the child for life.

Are Grace and Courtesy Outdated?

I can almost guess what some of you are thinking... Where are grace and courtesy in our society today? Are grace and courtesy outdated, things of the past? Look at the increase in juvenile crime – even in murders by 9 to 12 year olds. This year alone, look at the numerous shootings that occurred in elementary schools across the country. Children are shooting teachers; children are shooting children. I am not going to pretend that I have all the answers, but I think you will agree that some of the significant contributing factors include:

- the breakdown of the nuclear family
- the increase in divorce
- the influence of television and other media
- the widespread use of drugs
- the lack of purposeful jobs for our young

In the 90's, 1 out of 2 marriages ends in divorce. Not only do parents live apart, but families rarely live in the same community. The norm today is for families to be at opposite ends of the country, if not the world. Gone is the day that mom is at home waiting for her children with a glass of milk and two chocolate chip cookies. Instead, the only reception many children receive is the almighty television.

In the more affluent homes, nannies are raising children. For others, day care centers are doing the job. I am not trying to paint a picture of doom and gloom. I am simply trying to say it like it is. It is my belief that our children are being abandoned.

When MTV or *Beavis and Butthead* become the primary role models, you must agree that we have a problem. When children take to shooting children, it suggests that we wake up and take notice!

Every period throughout history has had its problems. Look at the Middle Ages with the bubonic plague. Look at Stalin, Hitler and Mussolini, and the devastation they caused throughout Europe in our century. It is a given that there will always be problems in the world. As Scott Peck says in his opening line of *The Road Less Traveled*, "Life is difficult. But it is not without hope. We can either succumb to the dark side of humanity, or we can each commit to doing whatever we can to make this world a better place."

Dr. Montessori never lost hope, despite having her schools and materials burned and having been exiled from

Europe. If anything, she became more passionate and determined to reach the children, for it is the children, she said, "who are the hope for humankind."

There is no question that grace and courtesy are rapidly being lost in today's world. But to think that it is outdated is wrong. If we ask what is in the child's best interest, then we know that we must all be willing to work harder at instilling the values of grace and courtesy, not only with our students but with their parents. As followers of Montessori, it is our charge – our obligation!

What is normalization, and how might it be revealed in the classroom as well as the school community?

Dr. Montessori believed that within each child is a vital urge for knowledge. He grows by his work. Through his work, freely chosen, he becomes transformed and shows the characteristics of normalization: poise, order, independence, self-reliance, the ability to exercise appropriate choices, self discipline, at peace with himself, kind and desiring to help others. Montessori says in *The Secret of Childhood*, "The normal education of a child should lead to transcendence, the mastery of himself in a transcendent environment, making use of the visible and invisible forces of nature." At the heart of Dr. Montessori's work was the recognition of the importance of the integrated person, the ordered personality.

Normalization is a point of arrival, not of departure. It may take several years to normalize a class. Normalizing the school community is a similar process.

In the classroom, there are three major components: the prepared environment, the teacher and the children. The teacher is the vital link between the child and the environment. It is imperative that the teacher understand the needs and tendencies of the children, within the context of Montessori's four planes of development, and prepare the environment accordingly.

Filled with love and respect for the child, the role of the teacher is to help each individual help himself to stretch to his fullest potential: cognitively, physically, socially and emotionally…to achieve inner discipline, self-reliance, confidence and genuine respect for his environment and fellow humans.

Let us remember Montessori's definition of a school: "a prepared environment in which the child, set free from adult intervention, can live in life according to the laws of its development. It is a place of spontaneous work, where the child is allowed to perfect himself, using the environment as a means."

We must remember that through work concentration is developed, and from concentration, normalization is revealed. This is the gift we can give to our children.

Modeling grace and courtesy within and throughout our schools

More than ever, we need to model grace and courtesy in our schools. We cannot, should not, allow our children to be swept up by a consumption driven, television oriented, valueless society. We need to educate our children to make intelligent and sensitive choices. We need to instill the values of hard work, sacrifice, love, compassion, responsibility, integrity and courage.

Like the classroom, the school community is comprised of individuals of different socioeconomic backgrounds, races, religions and cultures. The school consists of seven major components:

- the prepared environment
- students
- parents
- teachers
- administration
- board of trustees
- outside community

Whereby the role of the teacher in the classroom is to connect the child to the environment, the role of the administrator is to connect the parents, board and outside community to the Montessori philosophy of education as an *aide to life*. It takes work and time; most of all, it requires that we have a true understanding of Dr. Montessori's view for humanity.

Just as children pass through four planes of development, I have come to believe that a school goes through a similar process.

Our school in Connecticut is in its twenty-fourth year and, therefore, at the end of the fourth plane of development. At long last, we are beginning to be at a place of equilibrium, and we have begun to ask what we can give back above and beyond our daily work. It has not been easy getting to this place and, in fact, for the first twenty-one years of the school's history, we were in search of a new facility, a permanent home. It is nearly impossible to achieve normalization when you are living under the threat of being homeless! But three years ago, we were finally able to purchase our own building, along with four and a half acres of land.

As I speak to you today, we are building four more classrooms, a gymnasium, library, art studio and music room. My focus as the administrator has been to provide a secure, beautiful and peaceful environment, one that transcends the ordinary to the extraordinary; a sacred place for students, parents, teachers, board members, administrators and community members.

How is normalization achieved in the school community?

From my perspective, normalization in the school community is achieved in the same way we develop normalization in the classroom with the students. I have touched upon the significance of preparing a special environment throughout the school. Now I will focus on specific communication with parents, faculty and staff, board members and the community at large.

If we remember our own lessons in grace and courtesy as we communicate, we will move closer to a normalized state within our school. There are three main ways in which we communicate with our parents, staff, board and outside community:

- Verbally – through conferences, phone calls, coffees, that quick chat at the car or in the hall.
- Print materials – through newsletters, invitations, enrollment agreements, parent handbooks, etc.
- Activities – auctions, performances, holiday dinners.

Parents

How can we better communicate with current parents? Without the parents, we could not have the students. We know how to meet the needs of the child through the art of observation. To be a keen observer, one needs to call upon knowledge about that person, as well as intuit that which is not known. Are these new parents or seasoned parents; working parents or at-home parents; Howdy-Doody parents or baby boomer parents; take charge parents or laissez faire parents; energetic parents or burned out parents?! Bottom line, all of these parents have chosen Montessori for their child, and for this they are deserving of our greatest respect and attention.

From my experience, all parents who choose Montessori need and deserve clear and frequent communication about their children. This can be accomplished in a variety of ways, to include:

- Parent Education Series
- Fall and Spring Picnics
- Holiday Celebrations
- Fund Raisers, such as Book Fairs and Auctions
- Parent/Teacher Conferences
- Monthly Coffees (with the Administrator as well as with teachers on a rotating basis). I would like to mention that the coffees have been very well received. Parents feel they can share informally any issues they may have. In addition, it is a great way for new parents to meet the current parent body.
- School Anniversaries
- Grandparents Day
- Plays and/or Sing-a-longs
- Weekly Newsletter: For example, we began a weekly update called *Cobb Tales* that is distributed to our parents every Friday. One of our staff members compiles information from each department, including admissions, development, etc., and puts together a simple, yet informative mini-newsletter. I've brought examples for you to review.

As we nurture the children, so should we nurture the parents. We do this best when we involve them, communicate with them, love and appreciate them. Developing a positive relationship with parents is imperative for everyone, most especially the children.

Faculty and Staff

Like the assistant in the classroom, the administrator's role is to protect the lessons and to free the teachers to teach. Just as the teachers seek to stretch each child to his fullest potential, the administrator seeks to stretch each teacher and staff member to his fullest potential.

There are three ingredients that contribute to creating a happy and productive staff:

- Observation
- Communication
- Grace and courtesy

We need to observe the individuals who make up our staff. Are they new and enthusiastic, or have they been with you a long time and are losing steam? Are they outgoing or shy, confident or insecure? Each member of the staff has a personal life. Are they married, with children, single, divorced or separated? Are they caring for aging parents? Fulfilled or restless?

For example, I sit in on some parent/teacher conferences with our faculty to help them learn how to conduct a successful meeting.

Observe and communicate; get to know your staff. Be sensitive to their individual needs and challenge them to be all that they can be. Give them the respect that they deserve and treat them with grace and courtesy.

Board of Trustees

A board that does not understand its role will be an obstacle to normalization. Once again, we need to practice observation, communication and grace and courtesy. How are board members selected and for how long? What is the composition of the board: parent, past parent, lawyer, minister, teacher? What are the strengths and weaknesses of each board member? Who are the talkers and who are the doers? What is happening in their personal lives? Most importantly, what is their understanding of Montessori and of their role as a trustee?

At our school we show appreciation to board members with small gestures, such as sending flowers for someone who is hospitalized or small gifts during the holidays. Board members receive copies of our weekly newsletter and are invited to all school events.

It is critical that the administrator get to know each board member well, to understand their individual interests and strengths. The administrator must get the members of the board excited about Montessori's vision of education. A board that is inspired will work endless hours over many years to help the administrator build a normalized community. Such efforts should never be taken for granted but, on the contrary, acknowledged graciously and with courtesy.

Community

I think you will agree that fostering a positive relationship with the outside community is important. Once again, the key ingredients to having a positive relationship are observation, communication and grace and courtesy.

A school that is located in a city will undoubtedly have very different needs from a school located in the country. Are the majority of your students from dual career families? What are the public and private schools like in your area? What is the crime rate? What other facilities are available for your parents and children? Are there parks, swimming pools, museums and theaters?

Get to know your community and, in so doing, you will have a better understanding of how your school can meet the needs of your families and make a positive contribution beyond. Are there community outreach programs that your elementary students can be involved in with the elderly, the poor or for the environment?

I suggest that you take a careful look at how your school might be perceived by 'outsiders.' How do people know about you? Is your school listed in the phone book or real estate guides, with the Chamber of Commerce, with libraries and with local pediatricians?

What kind of image do you wish to project? Do your brochure, stationery and school publications accurately reflect who you are? Are the directions to your school clear? Is there adequate signage? Who receives visitors? Do you practice grace and courtesy when visitors come to your school? Who answers your phone? Is it generally the same person? Is that person equipped with the appropriate materials to answer most questions? How are you communicating with potential families?

We have printed special notes so that our Director of Admissions can handwrite a thank you card to each family who comes to visit. This simple act of courtesy could confirm to new parents that this school is a place where respect and manners are instilled – from the classroom to the office.

Normalization is a point of arrival, not of departure. Most importantly, it begins with ourselves. Do you all have the characteristics of normalization: poise, thoughtfulness, self discipline, inner peace? If our schools are to lead the child to transcendence, then we must continually stretch to our higher selves. This is what I believe Montessori meant by the spiritual transformation of the teacher. We too, as administrators, need to undergo a spiritual transformation. This requires reflection, introspection and an understanding of ourselves. It requires humility and a willingness to change for the benefit of the child.

Our society is at war with families today. It is as if we have all jumped on the same merry-go-round and don't know how to get off. Like the computer, faxes and e-mail, the merry-go-round goes faster and faster.

We can make a different choice. We can step off, slow down and take a breath. Our schools can provide a place of refuge. A sacred place that is pretty, peaceful and conducive to harmonious relationships. We can and should provide daily rituals for our children, parents and faculty. This includes how we handle arrival and dismissal, lunch time and birthdays. We should incorporate traditions such as a harvest lunch or May Day celebration. We should observe our students, faculty, parents, board and community and communicate with them effectively. Most importantly, we can give the gift of grace and courtesy to others, for it is through this gift that normalization will be revealed.

A school that is normalized is, after all, in a state of grace and, as such, will reflect all that is good and pleasing to God.

I would like to conclude with a quote from Maria Montessori:

> *Human teachers can only help the great work that is being done, as servants help the master. Doing so, they will be witnesses to the unfolding of the human soul and to the rising of a New Man who will not be a victim of events, but will have the clarity of vision to direct and shape the future of human society.*

Let us aspire to Maria Montessori's vision for humanity. Let us use the gifts of grace and courtesy to instill moral excellence within our schools. It is our duty. ❖

Mary Lou Cobb holds an AMI primary diploma and she currently teaches a primary class in addition to serving as head of the newly named school which she founded, The Cobb School – Montessori, in Simsbury, Connecticut.

Maria Montessori and the Cosmic Creation Story

Brian Swimme, Ph.D.

My career has been spent reflecting on the change in consciousness that has followed upon the discovery of evolution, and what I have come to realize is that, for most people, evolution is misunderstood as just another scientific discovery, as something akin to the discovery of a new moon of Jupiter or the discovery of an odd sea creature. For such humans, evolution is regarded almost as a thing, or as a fact having to do with nature out there somewhere. But precisely such an orientation seals a person away from a full recognition of what the discovery of evolution actually means.

Maria Montessori was clearly a genius of a high order, whose achievements are too numerous to present in one article. Here I wish to celebrate what I myself regard as her most astounding accomplishment, her recognition that with the discovery of evolution the task of educating the human species had forever entered a new phase. What most biologists, cosmologists, as well as many insightful futurists recognize today is that evolution is not just a fact – it is the *dynamic context for everything*. The discovery of evolution is the discovery of a new and universal context in the sense that each being or thing has *evolved* into its present state, and this statement holds true for humans and human cultures as well as for barnacles and mountains. But if this understanding is only now becoming mainstream in the sciences at the beginnings of the twenty-first century, we have to stop and honor a woman who was able to recognize the significance of this change and began building a new way of educating humans a century earlier, at the beginnings of the twentieth century. My own opinion is that the Montessori movement in education is primarily a movement of the twenty-first century, precisely because Maria Montessori's insights were so far ahead of the rest of the modern world.

My aim in this reflection is easy to state, difficult to accomplish. Maria Montessori could see in a flash that each child must be educated so that she understands herself as part of an evolving universe, must receive what Montessori referred to as a cosmic education. The modern world could not grasp this at that time. If it required genius for this insight a century ago, is it possible that today more of us can begin to recognize its truth? Is it possible that our time is the time when the modern world grasps what Maria Montessori meant by a cosmic education, and how vital it is that each child receive one?

My own attempt here is to consider the universe not primarily under the usual tag of "evolution" but rather of "story." A century of debate has encrusted the word "evolution" with all sorts of unhelpful connotations; my hope is that the category of "story" might better serve us in our attempts to understand what it really means to say that we have discovered a new context. What does it mean to have discovered a "new story"?

With the word story I have in mind primarily the story that comes out of four centuries of modern scientific research. This new story can even be understood as the crowning achievement of the entire scientific venture. This emerging story of the universe tells of the fiery birth of the world fifteen billion years ago, of the creation of the galaxies which followed the fireball's disintegration, of the appearance of the solar system five billion years ago, of the irruption of the first living cells on the planet Earth, of the florescence of life forms through four billion years of our planet's unfolding, and of the development of human culture over the last 100,000 years.

The details of this new cosmic creation story have only recently reached a preliminary completion point. Beginning with the seventeenth century's discoveries concerning the enormous age of the Earth, followed by the eighteenth and nineteenth century's discoveries of the evolution of life forms and of human societies, we have the twentieth century's investigations into the formation of stars and galaxies, and the final realization that the universe as a whole has evolved over fifteen billion years.[1] Some physicists use the year 1965, when microwave background radiation was detected and the Big Bang cosmology empirically confirmed, as the moment when science discovered the outlines of the full evolutionary story of the universe. All the more remarkable that Maria Montessori could move so quickly and so boldly into this new context decades earlier.

For most of us, coming so soon after such stupendous intellectual creativity, we stand blinking in the light of a major revelatory experience. No wonder we have difficulty recognizing what has in fact taken place. For suddenly we find ourselves possessed of a story that soars beyond all the cultural myths that formerly structured our societies. Suddenly we have in our hands and minds a new story of the universe, but it is not a story about nature out there; it is a story about ourselves as well. In former times, the emergence of such a new cosmological story had the power to evoke new modes of humanity.

But before proceeding, I need to say a word or two about the very nature of a cultural story. By a cultural story, or a creation story, or a cosmological story, I mean those accounts that satisfy the questions asked by humans with fresh minds. So early on our children begin asking all the deep questions. Where did everything come from? Why are we doing this? What is really going on anyway? The young desire to know where they are and what they are about. That is, they desire to orient themselves and live within a cosmic story.

By cosmic creation story I mean to indicate those accounts of the universe we told each other around the evening fires for most of the last 100,000 years. These cosmic stories were the ways the first humans chose to initiate and install their young into the universe. The rituals, the traditions, the taboos, the ethics, the techniques, the customs and the values all had as their core a cosmic story. The story provided the central cohesion for each society. "Story" in this sense means "world-interpretation" – a likely account of the development and nature and value of things in this world.

Why story? Why should "story" be fundamental?

Only through a story can we recognize our existence in time. To be human is to be in a story. To forget one's story is to go insane. Tribal peoples show a keen awareness of the connection between health and storytelling. The original humans will have their cosmic stories just as surely as they will have their food and drink. Our ancestors recognized that the universe, at its most basic level, is story. Each creature is story. Humans enter this world and awaken to a simple truth: "We must find our own personal story within the Great Story, the Great Epic, of all being."

In the modern world, of course, cosmic stories do not matter much for the systems of the world. We in the industrial states have focused solely on economics, and economic stories, to provide guidance and meaning for the whole of life. Most of the twentieth century has been the battlefield for two different economic stories, especially the American story and the Soviet story. For all the differences between capitalism and socialism, one needs to reflect long and hard on what they have in common. For in either of these stories, the universe and the earth are merely backdrops. The oceans were large and the species many, yes – but these immensities were just the stage for humans. This mistake is the mistake of the entire age.

In a sentence, I would summarize my own thinking in this way: all our disasters today are directly related to our having been raised in educational systems that did not provide us with a cosmic education, in educational systems that ignored the cosmos for an exclusive focus on the politics and economics and technologies of humans. We fail in so grotesque a manner because we were never initiated into the realities and dynamics and values of the universe. Without the benefit of a cosmic story that provided meaning to our existence as Earthlings, we were stranded in an abstract human world where we managed to convince ourselves that it made sense to invent nuclear weapons and to "develop" the Earth into so much ruinous waste.

One has to wonder over the modern age's strength of nerve in throwing over 100,000 years of initiating the young into the universe. But we had discovered scientific law, and so impressed were we by this blinding light, we simply threw out the cosmic stories for the knowledge the sciences provided. As Lord Dunsany remarked: "It is very seldom that the same person knows much of science, and about the things that were known before ever science came." But why tell the story of the Sun as a God when we knew the sun as a locus of thermonuclear interactions? Science gave us the real laws, so it is understandable we would trade fairy tales for mathematics, and would enter a quest that would enable us to leave behind once and for all the shifting sands of time and its stories. As Ilya Prigogine summarizes: "For most of the founders of classical science – even for Einstein – science was an attempt to go beyond the world of appearances, to reach a timeless world of supreme rationality – the world of Spinoza."

What a shock it has been to have story reappear and, this time, right in the very center of mathematical science. Someday someone will tell the full story of how "story" forced its way into the most antistory domain of modern science – I mean mathematical physics. Here I would like to indicate in broad strokes what has happened.

For physicists during the modern period, reality meant the fundamental interactions of the universe. In a sense, the world's physical essence was considered captured by the right group of mathematical equations. Gravity, or the Strong Nuclear Interactions were the real actors in the universe. The course of events was seen as of secondary importance, as the "details" structured by the fundamental dynamics of physical reality.The Story of Time was illusory – time was simply a parameter in the equations. There was nothing special about any particular time, for the mathematical equations showed nothing unique about any time.

The best story I know concerning our dismissal of time concerns Albert Einstein. Out of his own amazing genius, he arrived at his famous field equations, the mathematical laws governing the universe in its physical macrodimensions. What most disturbed Einstein about his equations was their implication that the universe was expanding. Such a notion made no sense in Newton's static universe. Motion meant a motion within the universe. The idea that the universe itself was dynamic was virtually impossible to formulate and remain within traditional Newtonian ideas about space and time.

To avoid conceiving of a dynamically changing universe, Einstein altered his equations. He added a term, the cosmological constant, that brought the mathematical universe back into control. But soon after Einstein published his equations, the Russian cosmologist Alexander Friedmann found solutions to Einstein's original equations – solutions where the universe was expanding in all directions. Einstein's response to Friedmann's communication was a polite dismissal of what seemed to be an utterly preposterous mathematical fiction.

When Edwin Hubble later showed him the empirical evidence for an expanding universe, Einstein realized his failure of nerve. Had he published his original equations, he would have made the greatest prediction in the entire history of science – that the universe had a beginning in time. For if the universe is expanding in all directions, then at a certain time in the past, all of the universe was in a single place, the birthplace of reality. He later came to regard his doctoring of the field equations as the "biggest blunder of my life."[1]

Even so, we now realize – following the work of Einstein, Hubble and others – that our universe did have a beginning in time and has been developing continuously for fifteen billion years. Every moment in time is new. We now realize that we live not in the static ultimately unchanging universe of Newton, but within an ongoing cosmic story.

Story forced its way still further into physics when in recent decades scientists discovered that even the fundamental interactions of the universe evolved into their present form. At the beginning they were different than they are now. That is, the laws that govern the physical universe today, that were thought to be immutable, are themselves the results of developments over time. From the beginning of the scientific enterprise we had assumed the laws were fixed, eternal, absolute. Now we have discovered that even the laws have their own story in time. The Cosmic Story, rather than being simply governed by fixed laws, draws these laws into its own drama. I hope the conclusion is clear. The ultimate reality of the universe turns out to be not mass, or energy, or information, or laws; the ultimate reality turns out to be story. The ultimate reality is that which answers the question, "What happened?"

What happens when physicists begin to value not only the repeatable experiment but history's unrepeatable events, no longer regarding each event as simply another datum useful for arriving at mathematical law but as a revelation all by itself? We have the possibility for a reenchantment with the universe, for a recognition that in the evolutionary development of the universe and of life and of the human, we have the greatest epic we have ever seen. We begin to suspect that the most significant task before us is to understand ourselves and the entire human venture within this story, rather than understanding ourselves primarily in economic or political terms.

A central desire of scientists in the future will be to explore and celebrate the enveloping Great Mystery – the story of the universe, the journey of the galaxies, the adventure of the planet Earth and all its life forms. Scientific theories will no longer be seen simply as objective laws. Scientific understanding will be valued as that power capable of evoking in humans a deep intimacy with reality. That is, the value of the electromagnetic interaction as objectively true will be deepened by our awareness that study and contemplation of the electromagnetic interaction allows humans to enter a rich communion experience with the contours of reality in the stellar cores, as well as in the unfolding dynamics of our sun and forests.

I am convinced finally that the story of the universe that has come out of four centuries of modern scientific work will be recognized as a supreme human achievement, the scientific enterprise's central gift to humanity, a revelation having a status equal to that of the great religious revelations of the past.

Of course, these are speculations. I may be wrong. Instead of scientists devoting themselves to a further exploration and celebration of the cosmic story, they may be entirely captured by the exploitive industrial processes and wasteful militaries of the planet. But I do not think so. The one reason I wish to draw attention to here is the planetary implications of the cosmic creation story.

I discussed Einstein's difficulties with his own equations to highlight an obvious and significant fact of the story – it has the power to draw humans into itself. Einstein did not wish to discover an expanding, time-developmental universe. Quite the opposite. Another famous physicist, Arthur Eddington, found the whole notion "abhorrent." But the story convinces regardless of one's previous cultural assumptions. This new story has the potency to offset and even to displace every previous world-view. Often such displacement of traditional stories results in social catastrophe, and this reality must be discussed. What I want to bring to the reader's attention here is that the human being, as constituted today, finds this new story undeniably tried to the truth, and this is great news indeed.

For suddenly the human species as a whole has a common cosmic story. Islamic people, Hopi people, Christian people, Marxist people and Hindu people can all agree in a basic sense on the birth of the Sun, on the development of Earth, the species of life and human cultures. For the first time in human existence, we have a cosmic story that is not tied to one cultural tradition or to a political ideology, but instead gathers every human group into its meanings. Maria Montessori was one of the very first humans to recognize the significance of this. This is one of the principal reasons for her appeal throughout the planet. With her sense of the universal nature of the evolutionary process that gave birth to a human species with a common nature, she broke out of the constraints of nationalistic ideology altogether.

Certainly we must not be naive about this claim of universality. Every statement of the cosmic story will be placed in its own cultural context, and each context is to varying degrees expressive of political, religious and cultural perspectives. But given that fact, we have even so broken through to a story that is panhuman; a story that is being deepened and extended through scientific research taking place on every continent and within every major cultural setting.[2]

What does this mean? Every tribe knows the central value of its cosmic story in uniting and sustaining its people. The same will be true for us. We are now creating the common story which will enable *homo sapiens* to become a cohesive community. Instead of structuring the planet around the Japanese story or the American story, and so on, we have the opportunity to tell instead the cosmic story and the ocean story and the mammalian story. Instead of building our lives around the various human agenda alone, we can build our lives and our societies around the story of the entire Earth Community.

This is a good place perhaps to make my final comment on the meaning of "cosmic creation story." Although with this phrase I refer in general to the account of our emergence out of the fireball and into galaxies and stars and earth's life, I also think of the cosmic story as something that has not yet emerged. I think we will only have a common story for the human community when our parents and our teachers and our poets tell us the story. For until our elders tell the story we have only facts and theories, all of which are crucial, but none of which is sufficient to give expression to our deepest feelings at finding ourselves in the midst of a cosmic adventure."

Most tribal communities understand the necessity of developing story-tellers – people who spend their lives learning the story and celebrating it in poetry, chant, dance, painting, music. The life of the tribe is woven around such celebrations. The telling of the story is understood both as that which installs the young and that which regenerates creation. The ritual of telling the story is understood as a cosmic event. Unless the story is sung and danced, the universe suffers from decay and fatigue. Everything depends on telling the story – the health of the people, the health of the soil, the health of the sun, the health of the soul, the health of the sky.

We need to keep the tribal perspective in mind when we examine our situation in the modern period. Instead of using our scientific knowledge to develop vibrant cosmic myths with corresponding and deeply involving rituals, we put our knowledge to use almost entirely in technological application. Our new common creation story has been ignored, left undeveloped. It is no wonder, then, that so many of us throughout the planet today are sick and disabled, that the soils have gone bad, that the sky is covered with soot and that the waters are filled with evils. Because we had no celebrations inaugurating us into the universe, the whole world became diseased.

But what will happen when storytellers sing of our common origin, our stupendous journey, our immense good fortune? What will happen when Maria Montessori's vision of a cosmic education becomes something every child receives, just as common in the education of the young as arithmetic or language? What will happen is that the human species will enter a new phase of its story. What will happen is that humans will become not just Americans or Italians or Chinese or Navajo, but Earthlings, cosmic beings emerging out of the mystery of Earth with a vast role to fulfill in the universe's drama.

The humans of today are convinced as never before that the future depends upon our acting together for the common good. Appearing in human consciousness as well is the recognition that our common story of the universe carries the promise of a unity inconceivable throughout the modern period. Evidence of this change in awareness is the 1997 conference sponsored by the American Association for the Advancement in Science and held at the Field Museum of Chicago where the topic of discussion was "The Epic of Evolution." Scientists and other intellectuals gathered to focus on the religious and cultural and social implications of this new and profound understanding of cosmic evolution. For centuries scientists had their immutable laws, and religionists had their theological doctrines; but dawning in these leading edges of human consciousness is the realization that even more fundamental than laws and doctrines is the story, and that humanity has a new story, with vast significance for the future.

One could summarize this by saying that in our time some of the most brilliant members of our culture are catching up to where Maria Montessori began decades ago. If this is true it means that the larger world, in various ways and with a variety of understandings, will be searching for individuals and teachers and programs with experience and skill in carrying out Montessori's work in cosmic education. The transformation out of the anthropocentric and Earth-destroying mentality of the modern period depends upon it. I feel confident that when historians of the third millennium reflect back on our time, they will see the Montessori movement in education as an early root that grew into a vast transformation in consciousness occupying humans throughout the twenty-first century. And when we think of the trillions of living beings who will be beneficially affected by this change in humanity, we begin to realize something more. What Maria Montessori inaugurated was not just a new educational movement, but a change in the very vitality and evolution of the Earth as a whole. ◆

NOTES

[1] Stephen Toulmin and June Goodfield, *The Discovery of Time* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1965).

[2] Paul Ricoeur, "On Interpretation", Kenneth Baynes, James Bohman, and Thomas McCarthy, eds., *After Philosophy* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1987), 358.

[3] Ilya Prigogine, *From Being to Becoming* (San Francisco: Freeman, 1980), 215. See also David Ray Griffin, ed., *Physics and the Ultimate Significance of Time: Bohm, Prigogine, and Process Philosophy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986).

[4] Charles W. Misner, Kip S. Thorne, and John Archibald Wheeler, *Gravitation* (San Francisco: Freeman, 1970), 410-11.

[5] In addition to Maria Montessori, the earliest celebrations of the emergence of a new creation story include Loren Eiseley in *The Immense Journey* (New York: Random House, 1957) and Teilhard de Chardin in *The Phenomenon of Man* (New York: Harper and Row, 1959). Thomas Berry in *The New Story* (Chambersburg, Penn: Anima Books, 1978) explores the cultural significance of the emerging story. For a concise presentation of the timing of the entire story, see Nigel Calder's *Timescale* (New York: Viking Press, 1983).

[6] My own versions of the story are: *The Universe Story* (San Francisco: Harper SanFrancisco, 1992), *Canticle to the Cosmos*, a twelve part video series (New Story Project: 134 Coleen St, Livermore, CA 94550), and *The Universe is a Green Dragon* (Santa Fe, NM Bear and Co, 1985).

Brian Swimme is a mathematical cosmologist, author and teacher whose primary field of research is the evolutionary dynamics of the universe, and the role of the human within these dynamics. He is the director of the Center for the Story of the Universe and teaches cosmology at the California Institute of Integral Studies in San Francisco. He is author of *The Universe is a Green Dragon* and co-author with historian Thomas Berry of *The Universe Story*.

The Company of the Elect

Renilde Montessori

In past decades there has been much snideness and vituperation about Montessori's elitism, its perceived imposition on the children of middle-class values. Some years ago the very title of this conference, *Grace and Courtesy – A Human Responsibility*, would have been sloughed off as insufferably precious.

But times change, cycles turn, values discarded as bourgeois conventions are rediscovered, found to be essential and fundamental to the human condition; and reinstated, like furniture once considered passé being brought down from the attic and reverently refurbished. The persistent rediscovery of ancient mores is a *leitmotif* in human evolution without which the music of the spirit would be an amorphous mumble.

There are, however, those among us who always tend to reach out for the good and the wholesome, for the beauty which they find in all of creation; who are always disposed to admire, to appreciate and to celebrate with their entire being that which the world has to offer. These are the children.

It takes great and consistent effort to destroy this tendency, but in the long run we manage to do so with remarkable efficiency, even though, in spite of us, many children retain their joyous vitality, perhaps with an early autumn tinge of melancholy.

A young princeling comes to mind who, with the greatest courtliness, showed visitors around the dank, dark and grotty basement which housed a well-known, very expensive, highly respected bilingual day-care centre in Toronto. "Please come this way, see, this is where we keep our books. And these are our blocks. If you will follow me, this is the art corner." The furniture was scuffed, the carpet filthy, the books tattered, the blocks covered in a patina left by many unwashed little hands, the art a conglomerate of snippets, dirty egg-cartons, dribbled glass paint pots ... an environment for the elect? Indeed, no. And yet the little boy presented it to the horrified guests with the graciousness of an accomplished host, far outshining that of the adults in charge who were unkempt, loud, rude and inhospitable to guests and children alike.

This is a sad little vignette depicting one out of thousands, probably hundreds of thousands of what Maria Montessori called "refugee camps" for young children. No doubt there are as many excellent day-cares, crèches, and day nurseries directed by cheerful, affectionate, intelligent people as there are horrors run by indifferent mercenaries with uneducated personnel. The fact is that the latter are a crime against the child, therefore a crime against humanity and should not exist. And yet it is noteworthy how many professional educators, child-minders, teachers, are indifferent to children; indeed, they do not like children. The ultimate tragedy is that of *parents* who do not like their children, and they abound. Even more dangerous are those who like their own and no others.

When we look dispassionately at our past and think of all the people who educated us, who minded us as children, who taught us – of how many can we truthfully say they liked children? The ones who did like us, who enjoyed the mirth of existence with us, shine golden in our memories.

This makes one wonder why so many people who do not like children have them, why so many people who do not like children become teachers.

Until very recent times we were still blindly following nature's mandate to perpetuate the species. We are becoming aware that the species has multiplied to an alarming degree, abounding in sufficient numbers to destroy its habitat. We have the knowledge and the power to take a hand in helping nature keep our perpetuation within reasonable bounds. We are acquiring thereby the interesting obligation to reconsider ourselves as potential parents, and to discover the true nature of the child so that we may best educate it.

Until very recent times there were few professions open to women, and teaching was one of them, which was a somewhat meretricious but understandable reason for becoming a teacher.

Now that there are professions galore, teaching can become a choice among many others; indeed, it can be taken up as a vocation which is as it should be. Again, this calls for a new awareness of what education entails, the immense responsibility it carries, the great demands it makes upon our wisdom, our endurance and the quality of our selfhood.

Parents and educators must now consciously assume the function of acolyte to nature and this requires a knowledge of the child which in earlier times was not a prerequisite either to become a parent or a teacher.

In *The Absorbent Mind* (Chapter XXVII - *The Teacher's Preparation*) Maria Montessori says, "...let us always remember, when we present ourselves before children, that they are 'of the company of the elect.'" The reason we are enjoined to remember this is precisely that it requires us to question and confirm our worthiness as educators.

Maria Montessori once pronounced with great severity, "It is your duty to be beautiful." For some odd reason beauty has seldom, if ever, been considered a necessary asset for people in charge of children. This is a dreary symptom of adults' lack of awareness of and respect for their dignity. Not only their dignity, but also their aesthetic sense. Their spirit is alight with the joy of existence. Their inclination to find things beautiful is abundant and generous precisely because they are "of the company of the elect," persons belonging to a specially privileged group, those chosen for the salvation of the species. So we wear scruffy sneakers and sweat suits.

We dress up for people we consider important, for occasions we consider momentous. What people are more important than our children, which occasions more momentous than the time we spend with them, helping them, encouraging their efforts to fulfil their pristine and powerful potential? We have learned to prepare an exquisitely clean, orderly, beautiful, intelligent environment for them. Many of us still have to learn that the pivot of this environment is the exquisitely clean, orderly, beautiful, intelligent educator within it, obviously taking into consideration that the human being is an entity composed of body, mind and spirit. Physical, mental and spiritual cleanliness, order, beauty and intelligence are the disciplines required if we are to merit the privilege of calling ourselves educators.

And, potentially, these disciplines are vivid within the child, for us to observe, for us to relearn, thereby becoming adequate to teach.

In *The Secret of Childhood* (Part II – Chapter I - *The Task of the Teacher*), Maria Montessori paints a scathing picture of the arrogant, proud and angry tyrant, possessed of all truth, who obviously neither loves, nor likes, nor respects children and is, therefore, iniquitous and unworthy of *the company of the elect*.

In *The Absorbent Mind* (Chapter XXVII - *The Teacher's Preparation*) she gives wise and sensible advice to the opposite of the foregoing – the young, inexperienced teacher, hapless, helpless in front of the first group of children in her charge, whom she is prepared to love, like and respect, but does not know yet how to direct. She has, however, a good chance to achieve excellence, if helped, and become worthy of *the company of the elect*.

There are many unworthy types of educators Maria Montessori does not mention – among others, the intrusive pseudo-psychologist; the emotional parasite; the paraphonic iceberg. Unworthy because their motives in working with children are self-serving, and one of the prerequisites for any educator is to be able to set the self aside.

In *The Absorbent Mind* (Chapter XXVII - *The Teacher's Preparation*) Maria Montessori writes:

"To serve the children is to feel one is serving the spirit of man, a spirit which has to free itself. The difference of level has truly been set not by the teacher but by the child. It is the teacher who feels she has been lifted to a height she never knew before. The child has made her grow till she is brought within his sphere.

What is the greatest sign of success for a teacher thus transformed? It is to be able to say, "The children are now working as if I did not exist."

She will be able to say: "I have served the spirits of those children, and they have fulfilled their development and I kept them company in their experiences."

The most appealing statement in the above quote is, "I kept them company in their experiences." It brings to mind another individual who should be included in the list of the iniquitous – the chum teacher.

There is an elegance in companionship between young and old, between child and adult; there is implicit a mutual respect, a recognition of different experience, the comfort of authority for the child, the tenderness of responsibility for the adult. Chumminess implies a totally inelegant, poke-in-the-ribs, chortling type of relationship. We may be equals, but we are not peers and it is ungrowthsome and disorderly to pretend we are, for we then no longer deserve respect and the children are deprived.

Children are deprived in many ways, of many rights, of many privileges that are their due.

"The great task of education must be to secure and to preserve a normality which, of its own nature, gravitates toward the centre of perfection. Today, instead, all we do is to prepare artificially men who are abnormal and weak, predisposed to mental illness, constantly needing care not to slip outwards to the periphery where, once fallen, they become social outcasts. What is happening today is truly a crime of treason to mankind, and its repercussions on everyone could destroy us. The great mass of illiterates, which covers half the earth, does not really weigh upon society. What weighs upon it is the fact that, without knowing it, we are ignoring the creation of man, and trampling on the treasures which God himself has placed in every child. Yet here lies the source of those moral and intellectual values which could bring the whole world on to a higher plane. We cry out in the face of death and long to save mankind from destruction, but it is not safety from death, but our own individual elevation, and our destiny itself as men, that we ought to have in mind. Not the fear of death but the knowledge of our lost paradise should be our tribulation." (*The Absorbent Mind*, Chapter XXIII - *Cohesion in the Social Unit*)

If we see the children as being of *the company of the elect*, we ourselves shall gain in dignity by giving them the freedom that is their right, and they will attain the disciplines of their human condition in their time, place and culture.

If we see the children as being of *the company of the elect*, they will grow in the knowledge that they are worthy and no material poverty will ever darken the radiance of their spirit.

If we see the children as being of *the company of the elect*, they will together create a cohesive, peaceful community, promise, ever less fleeting, of a peaceful world where our species, young and troublesome as it is, can mature and become wise.

We shall not be there to see it but we can leave with the peaceful conviction that generation, after generation, after generation, after seven generations, after seven times seven generations, *in aeternum*, children will be born and these children will all be of *the company of the elect*. We are beginning to perceive this. Is it not cause for hope that knowledge and understanding of the child may become a given in our collective unconscious? ❖

Renilde Montessori obtained her primary Montessori diploma from the Washington Montessori Institute in 1971 and has been lecturer, trainer and AMI examiner. In 1995 she became the General Secretary of AMI. *For complete bio see page 8.*

Peer Mediation – A Useful Tool for Grace and Courtesy in the Elementary Montessori Classroom

Carol Hicks

In the preface to her book, *Education and Peace*, Dr. Montessori stated, "Establishing a lasting peace is the work of education; all politics can do is keep us out of war."[1] Today it is difficult, if you pay any attention to the media, to ignore the sensational reports of violence throughout the world, particularly violence by children. The response by government officials is to offer more severe punishment for the offenders. We read of road rage, a type of rudeness that has intensified into violence. Good manners are often considered archaic or repressive. It is as if society no longer is content with declaring war on other nations but is also determined to declare war on itself.

It is difficult to remain positive in the face of these reports. We must remind ourselves that Dr. Montessori also said that "The child is both a hope and a promise for mankind." When we look into the eyes of a toddler, when we see the moment of compassion as an elementary child comforts a classmate, when we see the look of concentration on the face of a child at work, we are privileged to get a brief glimpse of this hope, this promise. It is the children who will lead us to peace, to a society based on graceful and courteous behavior, to a society that places the needs and well-being of people above material goods and territories. However, it is our task, as adults, to serve the child so that he may fulfill this promise to the future and live up to his fullest potential.

Supernature

Montessori contended that human beings have developed what she called a supernature. This is the totality of society, including both the physical and spiritual territories. We can no longer live without the supernature, for it provides us with the essence of humanity. Language is a part of the supernature, and it is with language that we convey to the next generation our way of being. The supernature is made up of all human inventions, such as paper and pencil, chairs, housing and cars. The supernature is also made up of our culture, from the style in which we dress and adorn ourselves to the thoughts we hold and the language with which we express our thoughts. The supernature includes our morals and our religion. We think, at times, we would like to leave everything behind and live a simple life. 'Back to the earth, abandon the material world' was a popular notion at one time. Those who followed this idea took with them their language, the idea of how a house should be built and seeds that were developed by generations of farming, to name but a few things. These people did not live outside the supernature.

At this time, the material side of the supernature is much more developed than the spiritual side. We have machines to do almost every type of work possible. We covet the possessions we have and work endless hours to acquire more. Montessori said, "The special province of morality is the relation between individuals, and it is the very basis of social life. Morality must be regarded as the science of organizing a society of men whose highest value is their selfhood and not the efficiency of their machines. Men must learn how to participate consciously in the social discipline that orders all their functions within society and how to help these functions in balance."[2]

Just as it was true in Montessori's time, we have little place for the child in the supernature. Our institutions, our physical structures and our laws are aimed at adults. We do talk more about child development now than when Montessori first began her work, but consider for a moment the current plight of the family in industrialized societies. Parents work long hours so they can possess larger homes, purchase more (supposedly) time-saving devices and garner more professional prestige while their children are relegated to increasing hours in day care or are left in the hands of a rotating series of young nannies. The number of children living in poverty in the United States increases each day. And many children in poverty do not have even the impersonal security of a day care setting, but instead, are left home alone to watch television or play unsupervised in dangerous neighborhoods. Obviously, children are still not given the exalted place they deserve.

The Child's Place in Human Development

We must remember that Dr. Montessori asserted that she did not develop an educational method but that, rather, she developed a theory of human development in which the child is the most important actor. Dr. Montessori called again and again for people to study the social organization of society, to study morality. She called upon people to put as much effort into the study of peace as we have into the study of hygiene, of weapons for war and of mechanical inventions.

Today, in schools and universities, we do indeed find curricula called peace studies and conflict resolution. Peer mediation is a part of these studies. But we, as Montessorians, must understand these curricula in the light of Montessori's theory. If we are to use any of the lessons these curricula put forth, we must do so with an understanding of whether or not they provide keys for the children as they develop their interpersonal skills. We must look at the personality of the child as revealed by an environment specifically prepared to meet the needs and characteristics of the child at his particular stage of development, as well as at the principles which guide the Montessori prepared environment. Before going on to examine the peer mediation program, I want briefly to recall to our minds a few of the principles that are relevant for this discussion.

The Prepared Environment

One principle which must be in place in any Montessori classroom is freedom and responsibility. Montessori held that children must be free in order to heed their own inner drives toward development. This freedom includes the right to choose work and how long to engage in a particular work. There is the freedom to choose where and with whom to work. There is the freedom to communicate with classmates and adults in the room. Each of these freedoms carries with it the responsibility to respect others. Children are expected to speak at a voice level that respects the work of others. Children may work near or with others, but they may not disrupt their work. Mario Montessori, Jr., when speaking of freedom, said, "One can only speak of a true community when each member of the group feels sufficiently free to be himself or herself, while simultaneously restricting his or her own freedom for the sake of adjustment to the group. It is in seeking an optimal solution to this tension between personal independence and dependence on the group that the social being is formed. Too much individual freedom leads to chaos. Too much uniformity, imposed by adults, leads to impersonal conformity or to rebellion."[1] We will see later that although many teachers and authors maintain that freedom is an important part of conflict resolution and peer mediation programs, they do not actually understand freedom and responsibility in the classroom.

Another important principle which we must keep in mind is that of independence. The child is driven from within to gain independence. Montessori expressed this in many ways, from the words of the child who said, "Help me to do it myself," to the statement, "Every unnecessary help is an obstacle to the child's development." From birth the child strives for independence. He begins with mastering his own body as he learns to grasp, to walk and to talk. As the child's will develops, so do his first steps toward intellectual independence. Whenever we do something for the child that he could do himself, we impede his development. When we examine the possibilities of conflict resolution and peer mediation programs, we should keep in mind the independence they may give to the children in solving their own problems.

The Child In the Second Plane of Development

Another important principle of Montessori theory is that the environment must be prepared to meet the needs and characteristics of the child in a particular stage of development. When speaking of peer mediation programs we are speaking of the children in the second plane of development, from six through twelve years of age. In the first plane of development, from birth through about six years, the child has the power of the Absorbent Mind, that mind which can take in, like a camera, all the facts of the environment, including objects, movement, language and the social interactions of people. At around six the powers of the Reasoning Mind come to the fore. Now the child wants to know the reasons for everything, how things are related, the causes and effects. The second plane child no longer explores the world with just his senses but uses his imagination to envision that which is not immediately before him.

In the first plane of development the child was constructing himself as an individual. In the second plane the child is exploring society. He is intent on understanding what human beings have built up, how they work and how their laws govern people. He has a particular sensibility toward justice and fairness and is capable of intense compassion. Peers become all important so that, at times, the family feels as if they are to be put on a shelf until the child needs them. This child looks to his peers rather than the adults in his life to evaluate himself. The child from six through twelve operates with what has been called the 'herd instinct,' which is the propensity of children to group together. Children in the second plane of development prefer to form their own groups rather than have an adult structure the group. They choose leaders and rules for their group. Forming their own groups and rules allows them to explore a small, manageable society. This is as much a part of their work as is learning long multiplication.

The question then becomes whether conflict resolution and peer mediation can be a key in the social interactions of the child in the second plane of development. Does peer mediation help the children explore interactions, or is it a useless aid which impedes their development?

Before I go on, I would like to give you a bit more background about MacDowell Montessori School, where I work, so that you can better understand the context for the examples I will give. I have worked at MacDowell since 1984. It is a large public school with over six hundred students. We have eight Children's Houses, seven lower elementary and five upper elementary classes, and we have just completed growth into a seventh and eighth grade adolescent program. Children are bussed from all over the city, which means our children come from a variety of racial, ethnic and economic backgrounds. All the parents want the best education for their children, but they may have different understandings of what Montessori is and different philosophies of life. This impacts the children most directly where children rely on what parents believe should be done at a time of conflict. Some parents tell their children that hitting is wrong under all circumstances. Others believe that it is important for children to learn to defend themselves, to stand up for themselves, and that if they are hit, they should hit back. These differences give rise to challenges that do not occur in schools with homogeneous populations, but they do not change our belief that Montessori education is for all children.

Conflict Resolution

Let us turn now to an examination of peer mediation and the broader picture of conflict resolution of which it is a part. Conflict resolution has a long history and includes practitioners such as Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Most of the current work in the field of education concerning conflict resolution grows from a response in traditional education to a crisis of violence and disrespect in schools and neighborhoods. Adults are treated with contempt by some students; disagreements quickly become arguments or physical fights. Some of the violence is obviously quite alarming. The idea behind conflict resolution programs is that children need to learn a variety of methods for handling problems they encounter in their everyday lives. They can be taught to recognize their emotions, choose from a variety of responses and act without violence. Elise Boulding, a leader in the peace education movement wrote, "The child who becomes an altruist, an activist and a nonviolent shaper of the future is then one who feels autonomous, competent, confident about her own future and the future of society, able to cope with stress, relates warmly to others and feels responsibility for them even when they are not directly dependent on her."

In her book, *Coping Through Conflict Resolution*, Carolyn Simpson defines conflict resolution as "an approach to solving conflict that focuses on identifying and satisfying people's needs in order to come to a solution that's good for everyone." A basic premise of all the conflict resolution approaches is that conflict is not a problem or a negative but an opportunity for growth. It is how we react to conflict which gives it a negative connotation. Turning again to Dr. Montessori, "Society at present does not adequately prepare man for civic life; there is no 'moral organization' of the masses. Human beings are brought up to regard themselves as isolated individuals who must satisfy their immediate needs by competing with other individuals." A popular story told in the conflict resolution literature is of two sisters arguing over the last orange in the house. Their mother comes in, observes the argument, cuts the orange in half and gives half to each girl. The first peels her half of the orange, throwing out the rind and eats the meat. The second peels her half, tosses out the meat and uses the rind in the cookies she is baking.

Conflicts arise from three basic issues: conflicts concerning resources, such as territory or material goods; conflicts concerning psychological needs, such as security or a sense of belonging; and conflicts concerning values, such as religion. A conflict may be about a combination of issues and may also be between individuals or groups. The conflict in the Middle East is between groups and concerns both disputed territory and religious beliefs. In a lecture entitled, *For Peace*, Montessori stated, "for if men continue to regard themselves as national groups with divergent interests, they will run the risk of destroying one another. This is the crux of all the questions regarding peace."

Certain skills are required for the children to resolve conflicts on their own. The conflict resolution programs all aim at making conscious those skills the children already have and teaching additional skills. The first skill is being able to identify one's emotional reaction. This may seem obvious but often it is not as easy as we think. For example, anger is usually a secondary emotion that swiftly follows some other emotional response. Unless we have learned to put our emotions under the control of our will we quickly react with anger. This reaction may be physical, such as hitting someone or slamming a door, or it may be verbal, such as insulting someone. Anger is usually generated when we first feel hurt or threatened. So, for example, when a friend promises James that they will eat together at lunch time and then goes off with someone else, James may react to the anger that arises. The steps in conflict resolution help him to recognize and then express that he really feels hurt and desires an apology from his friend.

Our possible responses to conflict can be categorized. We may choose avoidance, denial, accommodation, aggression, compromise or collaboration. Each of these have advantages and disadvantages, depending on the situation and the individual's response to the situation. Conflict resolution programs help the children to understand this. For example, flight is a type of avoidance. It is a good choice if someone else has chosen aggression as a way to solve a problem. But if a friend is continually annoying you while you are trying to work, avoidance of the situation is not effective.

Denial is similar to avoidance, but it also implies trying to fool yourself into thinking there is not a problem. For example, one student had been given a family nickname of Itty Bitty. Students caught on and began to use this nickname after her mother came to visit. They all thought it was harmless, but I could tell by her body language and facial expressions that this bothered her. When asked about it, she shrugged her shoulders and said it was not a problem.

Accommodation occurs when we give in to someone else even when we do not want to do so. There are many times when accommodation is a good solution. If your grandmother gave you a sweater for your birthday which you just do not like, but you put it on when you go to visit her you have accommodated her. Accommodation can also be a problem. You probably know someone who is always accommodating, but you get the sense that underneath the pleasing manner they are very unhappy. Some children need to understand that they do not always have to accommodate everyone else. There are ways they can meet their own needs and desires. These children often have low self-esteem and need to feel more confident in many ways.

Compromise can be a very effective method to resolve a conflict. It does mean that one or both parties need to be willing to give up something. The story with the orange is an example of compromise. Each sister got half of what she wanted, half of the orange. I have observed that compromise is a strategy that my students understand and use frequently.

At this time in our society children sometimes have been exposed to so much violence through the media that they see aggression as a possible solution to problems. They view conflicts as situations where one person wins and another loses. They are determined that they will not be the loser. Aggression may take the form of physical violence such as hitting, but it can also be shouting, getting very close to some one or using threatening words. Aggression does not solve a problem because it leaves untouched the underlying causes. Aggression merely results in the domination of one person or group over another. Some children need to be helped to understand that not only is aggression unacceptable in our schools, but it is not a useful solution to their problems. In this way, we can call to the reasoning mind of the child, as well as give them a clear message that aggression will not be tolerated.

Collaboration is the response that most conflict resolution programs emphasize. It requires that both parties put forth their view of events, their responses to the events and that they work together to find a solution that meets both their needs in a satisfactory way. The drawback to conflict resolution is that it is time consuming. The issue needs to be important enough to merit the time spent.

An important skill for using collaboration in conflict resolution is active listening, the ability to truly listen and to paraphrase back to the speaker what the listener has heard. This skill is an essential step so that both parties are clear about each other's perspectives. It calls for a type of listening that we seldom do any more. The listener must be free from all distractions, including taking notes or watching the rest of the class. Eye contact helps but carries different significance for different cultures. (People of European descent generally hold that direct eye contact is a sign of honesty and respect, whereas many Asian cultures believe that direct eye contact signifies defiance and a lack of respect.) The listener must concentrate on what is being said rather than on what he will say in reply. Implied in this type of listening is compassion and the ability to imagine what the speaker is describing, particularly how he feels about the incident. Presented in the right way, the children in the second plane of development are very interested in learning about active listening.

Most of the programs have a type of formula for 'I statements.' You are probably already familiar with the concept of 'I statements.' These are popular in many discussion groups, schools of psychology and so on. An 'I statement' simply means that you use the pronoun 'I' and speak directly to the person you want to address. Usually added is a formula for addressing what happened, the emotions that were experienced and the consequences for the speaker. For example; "When you told me you would eat lunch with me and then you ate with Robert, I felt hurt and angry, so I called you ugly," or "When you ran into me outside I thought you did it on purpose, so I got mad and pushed you back." The other person then makes a reply in the same 'I statement' formula. At first this seems a bit awkward. Once the students become comfortable with it, they can be more flexible, as long as they stay with the ideas behind the 'I statement.'

The next step in conflict resolution is for each child to take part in brainstorming solutions. Sometimes they need to clarify what they want to have as a result. Often it is no more than an apology. However, if it is an ongoing dispute, the results may be more complicated. For example, Joyce and Sally have adjoining storage cubbies in the classroom. Joyce is relatively neat while Sally always has possessions spilling out everywhere and into Joyce's cubby. Joyce may express in the 'I statement' format her frustration with always having to sort out Sally's items, but what she wants is not to have to clean up after Sally. Once this is clear, the students offer up at least three, but maybe more, possible solutions. There is no evaluation of these ideas during the brainstorming, and they may even be silly, as long as they are not hurtful. So Sally and Joyce may suggest: moving Sally's cubby to another location, allowing Joyce to decide when Sally needs to clean out her cubby, jointly cleaning the cubby, taking away Sally's cubby if she does not keep it neat or getting a cover for Sally's cubby to keep the items contained.

After they have several solutions the students evaluate each. The solution must meet the needs they expressed, be acceptable to both students and be in accordance to classroom rules. In the example of the two cubbies, if they choose to move one of the cubbies they would need to see if this is acceptable to anyone else affected by the move. The students then formalize the agreement in some way. They may shake hands. They may write down the agreement or they may get a witness.

There are many different conflict resolution curricula on the market. Unfortunately, many of them have become oriented to worksheets and activities structured by the teacher. They are, additionally, all class lessons layered over the daily classroom plans. The programs I have seen that are the best talk about the need for cooperative learning methods in the classroom. They discuss giving the children some freedom to solve their own problems and work collaboratively in groups. Even the best of these do not satisfy the theory of freedom and responsibility that Dr. Montessori put forth. The collaborative work is teacher generated and controlled, and the freedom to solve their own problems is usually relegated to a special period of the day.

Of course, you may have the perfect Montessori classroom where all is harmony and children never have conflicts with each other. I have never experienced this myself. I agree with the people who are working on conflict resolution techniques when they say that conflicts are an every day part of life. They occur when you drive and two people want to merge their cars into the same physical space. They occur when two children want to use the same volume of the encyclopedia. They occur when we feel passionately about the way hand washing was presented in your training and someone else differs with you. They occur when someone hurts your feelings, even unintentionally. Certainly children in the second plane of development, who are practicing living in society, exploring justice and developing compassion, are bound to make errors that result in conflicts. It is not always possible just to smile politely and give way to the other person. This may work when you are merging on the expressway, but what about the volume of the encyclopedia? How do you handle those staff disagreements about how to teach a foreign language in the Montessori classroom when parents are demanding it?

Again, from Dr. Montessori we hear, "Education must concern itself with the development of individuality and allow the individual child to remain independent not only in the earliest years of childhood but through all stages of development. Two things are necessary: the development of individuality and the participation of the individual in a truly social life. This development and this participation in social activities will take different forms in the various periods of childhood. But one principle will remain unchanged during all these stages: the child must be furnished at all times with the means necessary for him to act and gain experience. His life as a social being will then develop throughout his formative years, becoming more and more complex as he grows older."

I have found that the conflict resolution approach is easily woven into grace and courtesy lessons in the Montessori elementary classroom and can be used informally. It need not be done in the formal way that the teacher's guides for traditional education present. I strongly recommend that you not adopt any of these programs. Simply look them over and get an understanding of some of the techniques you can use. Most likely, if you are teaching in the elementary classroom you are already using many of these techniques yourself. When students come to us with their problems we need to help them solve these problems themselves. I know in my early years of teaching I spent way too many hours listening to children tell 'their side' of a problem and then madly thinking of how I could come up with a Solomon like solution for them. Then I went to the other extreme; when children came to me I told them, "That is your problem. Please solve it yourself." Yes, I told them they may go out in the hall to talk it over or some such nod to help, but I really was not giving them any skills for solving these problems.

Once I explored the concepts that the conflict resolution programs were putting forth, I began to include them in grace and courtesy lessons with my class. I introduced 'I statements' and the reasoning behind them. I used the technique of 'I statements' and brainstorming solutions when I helped students solve their own problems. At the end of these discussions, we usually talked about other ways they could handle such a problem in the future. I used the categories of responses as a mental guide to help the students expand their repertoire of ways to respond. In the beginning of this process, most children seemed limited to ignoring or tattling. As we all grew more sophisticated, they could come up with a variety of ideas. After a while, I began to ask them if they really needed my help or whether they thought they could use these techniques themselves. I would remain near by to give help when they asked.

Gradually my students were taking over more and more of these problems. When Richard continually approached a group of boys who were working on a dinosaur project to ask them irrelevant questions, they became frustrated. At first they tried to ignore Richard, but Richard was very persistent. I was in the middle of a lesson and did not want to intervene. Finally, two of the boys approached Richard. They proposed that if he left them alone for one hour, they would agree to work with him on any math work he chose at the end of the hour. Needless to say, Richard was agreeable, not to mention ecstatic. This was truly a collaboration because each party got their needs met. The boys were left uninterrupted to finish their project, and Richard got to work with them on math, which was what he wanted all along.

Early in September one year, a student, Cornelius, told two new six year old students who were having a problem, "The teacher won't help you with that. In this class we solve our own problems. I'll teach you how." Dr. Montessori said, "He (the child) seeks some very precise goal, and he seeks it with an instinctive directness of purpose. This instinct that impels him to do things by himself makes it incumbent upon us to prepare an environment that truly allows him to develop. When he has freed himself of the oppressive adults who act for him, the child also achieves his second goal, working positively toward his own independence." The skills the students acquired through these few lessons enabled them to act independently of me in solving most of the conflicts they encountered with their classmates. Once I quit imposing myself as the sole mediator and arbitrator, they willingly took on the role. "The adult must help the child do things entirely on his own, for if the child does not reach the point of ceasing to rely on the help of adults and becoming independent, he will never fully mature intellectually or morally." These words of Montessori assured me that I was on the right track.

As I have said, MacDowell Montessori school is very large. Each teacher institutes his or her own classroom problem solving techniques, but there is a general agreement that we turn as much as possible over to the children. These techniques are used on the playground as well, where as many as two hundred children are using a confined space at the same time. Students are encouraged to talk out their problems and solve them by themselves, and then report the agreement to an adult supervisor whenever possible.

I have spent some time on the conflict resolution techniques before talking about peer mediation because they are essential to a successful peer mediation program. Before you institute a peer mediation program, you need to take stock of how problems are solved in your classroom. Are children lined up to speak with you about conflicts they are having with other children? Are you the only person who solves these problems? Do you find yourself telling the children that you are busy giving lessons, and they will have to solve their problems themselves? Are children sent to some other authority figure in the school, such as an administrator or your classroom assistant? Or have the children devised their own plan for solving problems? They often do this on their own, bringing in outside experiences and the working of their own reasoning minds. Perhaps you have begun using conflict resolution techniques already. If the children are satisfactorily solving their conflicts in a fair and acceptable manner, but there are still occasional problems that need a third party, then you may want to begin a peer mediation program.

Peer Mediation

Let us turn now to the actual peer mediation program. To begin, we need to examine what a mediator does and how this differs from the role of an arbitrator. A mediator is a neutral third party who assists participants in arriving at their own solutions. According to the *American Heritage Dictionary*, the word mediate comes from the Latin word *mediate*, meaning "to be in the middle." The *American Heritage* says that an arbitrator is someone "who has the power to judge or ordain at will." I find it interesting that arbitrator and arbitrary are related words. Even when we are trying our best to be fair, as adults with more power and authority than our students, we are arbitrators when we listen to our students problems and decide upon solutions. Peer mediators have no more authority than the participants. They are trained to listen and communicate effectively, help brainstorm solutions and aid the parties in agreeing to a single solution. Peer mediators are called upon when two students cannot solve their conflict without help.

Peer mediators at MacDowell are selected by the staff. They must be in the nine to twelve year old class. The selection process is based on children who are perceived as leaders by their peers. Not all the students are positive leaders in the eyes of the adults. The class clown may make an excellent peer mediator. The only basis for eliminating a student from the selection process is someone who intimidates or bullies others. Peer mediators serve the entire elementary population and so represent the five upper elementary classrooms and reflect the diverse population of MacDowell's student body. Students serve as peer mediators for a school year, but,hopefully, some experienced students will return for a second year of service.

In September, the students go to another site to receive training in conflict resolution and mediation techniques. Going out of the building lends an impression of importance to the process of training, as well as helping to minimize distractions. We have used conference rooms in local businesses and at Marquette University over the years. Training takes about three half-days and is run by an outside specialist. An administrator and the teacher (or teaching assistant) who will supervise the peer mediators also attend. MacDowell has a team of about twenty five mediators each year.

During the training session the students first go through exercises that help them understand the conflict resolution and communication techniques that I have already described to you. Students also learn about body language and the role it plays in communication. They learn in the training session that the peer mediator must remain neutral. The peer mediators experiment with language that heightens tension such as, "You always play with Julia; you never play with me." They are also told that peer mediators do not give advice, tell about times in which they have had similar experiences or solve the conflict for the participants.

Some direct instruction is used, but the training sessions generally rely on role playing and group discussions. For example, the students are given a conflict between two students in which one has found a pencil, and the other is accusing him of having stolen it. The students are asked to write down several different verbal ways to communicate the problem. They then form small groups and role play each of the different approaches, and they discuss which approaches heighten the emotions and which are a more calm and reasoned. Another exercise is to switch roles in an argument. Students are asked to begin by taking a position on a debatable point. The topic is usually fun in order to keep the focus on how the process works. For example, the students are asked to play the part of the giant from the story *Jack and the Beanstalk*. They are to argue that Jack is nothing more than a thief and should be punished. They then have to switch roles and play the part of Jack, who presents the position that he had every right to take the items that the giant stole from others.

The next step in the training process is for the students to learn about the steps and ground rules of peer mediation. (I will describe these in a moment.) The last part of the training consists of role playing different mediation possibilities. Students take the roles of mediators or students with a problem. Small groups present to each other and receive feedback from the observers. They are then given ideas on how to initiate the peer mediation program at MacDowell and ways to support each other through the process. Our peer mediators generally have met as a team with the adult supervisor on a monthly schedule. They discuss any problems that they are having and ways to solve them. They share things that they have learned from the sessions and they give suggestions to the adult supervisor for ways to improve the program.

Once they have finished the training sessions, the peer mediators go to each elementary classroom in groups of four. They explain the peer mediation process, the forms the students need to fill out and the rules that govern peer mediation, and then they role play one or two sample mediations. This is repeated every year because it refreshes students' memories about the process and it introduces the program to new students.

A schedule is drawn up for the mediators. Two mediators work as a team. We usually need two or three teams working on a given day. All the mediations take place in the afternoon to minimize disruption to the morning work period.

A peer mediation begins when there is a conflict among two to four students that the students are unable to resolve without help. Peer mediation is not effective with more than four students. Any student with a disagreement may fill out a form which is available in their classrooms as well as in common rooms throughout our building, such as the office. On the form the student writes his or her name, room number, the date of the conflict and the basic problem. When the mediation session begins, all the students involved have to agree that they are willing to use peer mediation as a way to resolve their problems. These forms are placed in an envelope which hangs on each classroom door.

The peer mediators go around after the final lunch time and collect all the forms. They look over the forms and decide how many mediations they need to complete. If there are too many to finish in an afternoon, they quickly prioritize the problems by how serious they are. The ones that are set aside are the top priority for the next day. They then go and get all the students whose names are on one form.

The mediation takes place in a room that offers privacy. An adult is nearby in case he or she is needed, but no adult will intervene unless a student threatens violence or s/he is asked by the peer mediators. The adult must carefully maintain this rule if the peer mediators are to have the confidence they need. (We usually have an educational assistant sit near the sessions while she does material making and repairs.)

When they invite the students who have requested a mediation to come to the session, they first check two conditions. Are the parties still wanting to proceed? Frequently the students have resolved the conflict on their own before the mediators arrive. Sometimes the six year olds even forget that they had a problem! The other condition is whether the students are still angry. Peer mediation does not take place if one or both of the students are so angry that they cannot talk quietly and reasonably. The mediation may be postponed or the problem may be referred to an adult by the mediators.

There is a basic script that the peer mediators follow during the session. At MacDowell the students begin by introducing themselves and their roles as peer mediators. They state that there are four ground rules. After each ground rule is stated, they get verbal agreement from each disputant to follow the rule. First, they ask if each person is willing to solve the problem through mediation. Then they agree to no name calling, 'put downs' or physical threats or actions. Next, they agree not to interrupt anyone who is talking. Then they agree to keep everything confidential. The peer mediators also state that anything said in the mediation is confidential and that they will not repeat it unless it is necessary to tell an adult for the safety of any student. The peer mediators tell the other students that if the disputants do not follow the rules the mediation will be halted, and the problem will be referred to an adult. The peer mediators tell the students that if anything comes up about drugs, weapons, alcohol, touching of private parts or other sexual harassment, the mediation will immediately stop and they will tell an adult.

The person who initiated the mediation is invited to begin. The peer mediators ask him or her to tell what happened. When the disputant is finished, the peer mediators paraphrase what they have heard in language that is clear and non-inflammatory. They then ask the student how he felt about the problem and paraphrase that as well. This process is repeated for the other students. This step is called defining the problem. Depending on the reactions of the students involved, the peer mediators may ask each one to repeat what they heard the other person say. They then ask each person, one at a time, what they are willing to do to solve the problem. They may use the brainstorming technique if the solutions are far apart or seemingly insincere. Each time the peer mediator uses active listening techniques. "So what you are willing to do to solve this problem is..." Then the peer mediators ask each disputant if they think the problem is solved. Once a solution is agreed upon, the peer mediators write it down on the form and each participant signs the agreement. They then ask each person, in turn, what they could do differently in the future to avoid a repetition of the problem. They end the session with a handshake, a reminder that peer mediation is confidential and congratulations for working things out.

When there are a low number of requests for peer mediation sessions, the peer mediators go back over the forms and select ones that are about three weeks old. They briefly meet with the students involved to check on how things are going and to ask them if they found the peer mediation helpful.

Most of the problems brought to the peer mediators arise from the playground time. Let me describe a typical peer mediation session arising from this type of problem. Marques and Cornisha have had a problem on the playground. They are in different classrooms, and so Cornisha signs both of them up for peer mediation. They hear the rules and agree to them. Even though both students are still upset, they are cool enough to contain their anger so the session goes ahead.

During the mediation session, Cornisha says that she was playing foursquare and had to run after the ball when Marques ran right into her, on purpose, and knocked her down. At this point, Marques interrupts to say that it was not on purpose. He is reminded by a peer mediator that he agreed not to interrupt and that he will get a turn to talk. He is told that if he continues to interrupt, the mediation session will be ended. Marques folds his arms across his chest and scowls, but he does not interrupt again. Cornisha explains that she hurt her knee but, most of all, she is angry because Marques did not even stop to see if she was hurt, which is the playground rule, and he did not apologize.

Marques explains that he was going back for a pass while playing and did not see Cornisha. He says that he said 'sorry,' but he could not stop because he was about to be tagged. He then states he was upset because Cornisha called him a bully and said he was ugly. The mediators ask Cornisha if she has anything to add. She says she did not hear him apologize, but she knew he said something.

As a solution, they both agree to apologize to each other for their parts in the problem. Marques also agrees to get the football players to move their game further away from the foursquare area so they do not bump into players. This solution is acceptable to both of them and so is signed and carried out. Could Cornisha and Marques have solved this conflict on their own? Given their personalities and the fact that they are in different classrooms, probably not, but maybe. They may have ignored the problem. They may have gone to an adult. In this instance, they chose peer mediation.

Peer mediators take one afternoon a week to do their sessions, plus the monthly meeting. The disputants are interrupted from their work when they are called to the mediation. Peer mediators are instructed not to interrupt a lesson but to postpone that particular mediation. At MacDowell, we have found that the peer mediation has considerably lowered the number of problems on the playground. Children use the skills that they observe in peer mediation to address their own problems or to help their friends settle their problems without the formal peer mediation session. In the beginning of the year, there is always a flurry of mediation requests, particularly from the six year old students. It is just like any new activity you introduce to the class. After a while the number of requests levels off, and many days there are no requests at all.

Some schools institute peer mediators in individual classrooms. In this case I recommend that all the students are trained in the mediation process and that the task is rotated so that everyone gets a turn. This is not something I have tried at MacDowell since the combination of in-class conflict resolution skills and the school wide peer mediation program seems to be effective.

If you are interested in starting peer mediation in your school, I suggest you investigate your local public schools to see if they have a program in place and someone available to do training sessions with the students. Once you have gone through the session, just as with any specialist, you may lead the sessions in the future. If you are going to do a school wide program you need to have the agreement of all the elementary teachers and the administration. You may start with just your own classroom. There are books and video tapes available that describe the process and give suggestions for training peer mediators.

Reflections

In preparing for this talk, I reflected upon the conflict resolution and peer mediation program at MacDowell. I asked myself if the program is appropriate or whether it is something we have gotten ourselves into and now continue because we have 'always done it.'

The peer mediation program appeals to the needs and characteristics of the second plane child. It requires that they use their reasoning minds to solve conflicts. They are given the opportunity to use their intelligence and will to control their emotions without denying their emotional reactions. It appeals to their sense of justice, for they are exploring possible solutions that are fair to all parties. They are allowed to form their own groups and freely explore these problem solving techniques as they work in the classroom. They enjoy hearing that these techniques grew from leaders such as Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and that they are practiced outside the classroom as well. They gain more independence from the adults as they gain skills in solving their own problems. As usual, from the beginning of the peer mediation program, the students were much more creative and compassionate in their problem solving than I was. They took the few skills I gave them and went beyond what I had imagined.

I asked myself whether conflict resolution and peer mediation lessons should be part of the grace and courtesy lessons. Did they belong to the broader heading of Practical Life? Would these lessons give the children a key to social interactions? I watched as students grew beyond a basic concept of distributive justice, where rules were applied without flexibility and fair meant the same for everybody. I observed a greater range of reactions and problem solving skills than I had seen when the students were not given these lessons.

When I view the conflict resolution and peer mediation lessons as keys, I remind myself that keys are there for the students that need them, not necessarily for all students. Many of the students in my class did not take part in the small group lessons on ways to solve their conflicts. They either did not need the lessons or they learned the skills from their classmates. These lessons break down and provide an analysis of the steps we take when we have a conflict with someone else. They provide points of interest for the elementary children by giving various ideas for solving the same problems and by appealing to their reasoning minds. There is no right or wrong way to solve each problem, only better and better ways. The children must exercise their wills to choose the good in each situation. So my answer is that, yes, these lessons can be viewed as grace and courtesy lessons.

Are conflict resolution and peer mediation programs for every school? I doubt it. Your school may have found a different way to help the children gain skills in interpersonal problems. You may find it useful to review the literature that is available to see what may be useful to your particular situation. I do know that, because of freedom and responsibility within the Montessori prepared environment, our students are better able to develop and practice ways to interact with each other that are peaceful and loving.

Let me close by quoting once again from Dr. Montessori: "It has been our experience that if the child and the adolescent do not have a chance to engage in a true social life, they do not develop a sense of discipline and morality. These gifts in their case become end products of coercion rather than manifestations of freedom. The human personality is shaped by continuous experiences; it is up to us to create for children, for adolescents, for young people an environment, a world that will readily permit such formative experiences."[11] ❖

NOTES

[1] Montessori, Maria, *Education and Peace*, (Oxford, England, Clio Press, 1995) viii.

[2] Ibid., xiv.

[3] Montessori, Mario, Jr., *Education For Human Development*, (New York, Shocken Books, 1977), 26.

[4] Boulding, Elise, quoted by Harris, Ian, in *Peace Education*, (Jefferson, North Carolina, McFarland & Co., 1988) 123.

[5] Simpson, Carolyn, *Coping Through Conflict Resolution and Peer Mediation*, New York, Rosen Publishing Group, 1998), 2.

[6] Montessori, Maria, *Education and Peace*, xi.

[7] Ibid., 25.

[8] Ibid., 56.

[9] Ibid., 55.

[10] Ibid., 101

[11] Ibid., 32

Carol Hicks is AMI trained at both the elementary and primary levels. She is currently the program coordinator at MacDowell Montessori Public School and has eleven years esperience at the elementary level. She also serves as an AMI consultant at the elementary level.

Chivalry and the Development of Service

Margaret E. Stephenson

I am going to address this conference by first giving a slight, but significant, change to its title. I want to talk of "Grace and Courtesy – ***our*** human responsibility." It is not ***a*** human responsibility, something we can pick and choose to accept or not! Because we are human, it is ***our*** responsibility, something that is part and parcel of our humanity, something that must become as familiar to us as breathing, and because it is ours, it is individual, our own responsibility. It becomes a collective only when society, a group of individuals, cooperates to act together in grace and courtesy.

Next, because this is a Montessori conference, we have to put the theme into a Montessori context, into relationship with Dr. Maria Montessori's principles and practice and see how grace and courtesy fit into Dr. Montessori's aim to "give aid to life." Grace and courtesy cannot be divorced from the rest of Dr. Montessori's teaching on the task of the child. This task, she said, was to be "the formation of man, orientated to his environment, adapted to his time, place and culture."

"The formation of man" – the object of Montessori's work – was man, the human being, a unique species. Her work was to observe this species and, from her observations, to show the rest of us how we too could aid life. It is because the object of her study was man, the human being, not a method of education, a curriculum, a syllabus, all of which can change with the fashion of the time, that Dr. Montessori and what she taught can never become old-fashioned, can never be politically incorrect, can never be outdated and irrelevant, because man is always up-to-date and never changes in his essential nature.

It is that essential nature of the human being that formed the object of Dr. Montessori's study. If her aim, and ours, is 'to aid life,' what are the factors in life that we need to take into consideration? What ***is*** the human being? What are the essential factors in his nature that we have to deal with?

In the drama of creation, in the succession of acts that realised the universe and our world, the human being came late in time. And he came as a unique creation, a species uniquely gifted in the material world with intellect and will. But this gift comes with a price. Because the human being has been given freedom to act, has not been "set" to a certain programme, he can choose how to act. But this freedom to choose carries with it responsibility. This is why I want to address grace and courtesy as "our human responsibility." The gift of intellect enables us to know; the gift of will enables us to choose. Intellect and will, because they are human characteristics, are there in potential when the human baby is born. Because they are in potential, they can develop. The task of the adult is to make possible the development of the human potential – the development of intellect, the development of will. Only as these two human attributes develop, and in the measure that they develop, can grace and courtesy become a human responsibility, a responsibility of each one of us.

This brings us to a major principle of Dr. Montessori's, her realisation and teaching of the *Four Planes of Development*. Her understanding of these four planes led her to postulate that education could not be a matter of just adding on year after year to the process of schooling, of making each year a bit harder than the last, with more to study and to be tested on. The process of development of the human being passes through four stages, from birth to maturity, and each stage has different needs to be met, if the potential of the stage is to be achieved.

Only if the potential of each stage is achieved, is the individual ready for the next stage. The acts of grace and courtesy, therefore, have to be put into context with the Planes of Development if they are to become, at each stage, the responsibility of the individual human being. Therefore, the acts of grace and courtesy have to be studied and presented in relation to the Planes of Development.

Another significant principle of Dr. Montessori's is her teaching of the human tendencies. These are the characteristic propensities of the human being which enable him from the moment of birth to become a man orientated to his environment, adapted to his time, place and culture. They are the characteristics, given to the nature that is the human being, that enabled man, from his first appearance on the earth, to learn and to conquer his environment and to make the possibility of living within it and from it, in such a way that his human needs, physical and spiritual, were catered for and satisfied. It was the operation of the human tendencies which enabled human beings to learn how to form societies, to become able to cooperate with one another, to serve and to share with one another and, as time in human history went on, to form tribes, nations and empires.

The human tendencies have allowed the intellect and will to come into play, so that human development can expand and grow. Grace and courtesy have to be studied and presented in relation to the human tendencies if they are to become a responsibility of the human being. As with the Planes of Development, the human tendencies have to take their place in our study of grace and courtesy as our human responsibility. The exercises of grace and courtesy cannot just be counted as one of the four sections into which the exercises of practical life are divided, with a few examples to be presented to the students of a training course and to the children of a Montessori class. The exercises of grace and courtesy tend to have become the "poor relations" amongst the exercises of practical life.

Instead, they have a transcendent value in the making and maturing of the human being, and only if the adult world realises this transcendent value, will grace and courtesy become the fullest expression of the human being and of his responsibility in the realm of creation.

The *Oxford Dictionary* defines grace as, first, attractiveness, especially in elegance of proportion or manner or movement, and secondly, as courteous goodwill. It defines courtesy as polite, considerate behaviour or acts.

But here is another definition. St. Francis de Sales spoke of courtesy as "the fine flower of charity." And there we come to its transcendent value. "Charity" – "love" – "the fine flower of love." And if we go to love – in its essence – it is not a fluffy feeling around the heart; it is not roses and chocolates; there is nothing soft and velvety about it. It is an act of the will – to wish the good of the other.

That is what we have to keep in mind when we consider grace and courtesy in terms of our human responsibility. It is not we who are to be considered – it is the other person – our consideration has to be for him.

Dr. Montessori has told us that "to do an action gracefully it is not enough to do it with a smile on one's face." To make the graceful act the fine flower of charity, the smile has to be in the heart – the act has to be an act of love, one for which we are responsible, an act of the will.

But in order for the will to act, there has to be knowledge. The will is a blind faculty; it has to be illuminated by the intellect. The acts of grace and courtesy cannot become acts of human responsibility until knowledge of them has been given to the intellect, and the will has been challenged to choose to act with grace.

As with all training to human responsibility, the development of it depends on education. That education begins in the home. And if it does not begin there, the foundation for the future is lacking. Human responsibility begins with the parents and their responsibility is to educate their child to graceful, courteous behaviour, and thus to love.

The education of the child to grace and courtesy, to love and service of others, begins from the moment the child is born and therefore enters human society. That human society is first of all the family, the first unit of society, the foundation of society. That unit of society is a prepared environment in which the child orientates himself and adapts himself to his time, place and culture. This first prepared environment is one of furnishings, of movements, of language. On all of these the child's human tendencies operate to enable him to make a knowledge of them. He has to explore what there is in the environment, to orientate himself within it, to make order of it, to communicate within it, to practise and repeat all that his absorbent mind takes in from this environment.

The child, when he is born, enters the first plane of development with its particular psychological characteristics. He is a sensorial explorer of facts; his environment is a field of sensorial impressions upon which his human tendencies operate. Each plane of development, Dr. Montessori showed us, was divided into two sub-planes. The psychological characteristics of the plane operate throughout both sub-planes – in the first sub-plane to set a pattern, in the second sub-plane to crystallise and organise that pattern to ensure it will work, to make it into the child's own pattern.

For the first plane of development, Dr. Montessori emphasized, the child is the possessor of what she called "an absorbent mind." This absorbent mind operates differently from the adult mind and belongs substantially only to the first plane of development, becoming, at the onset of the second plane of development, the reasoning mind, lasting, debarring accident, for the rest of life.

Dr. Montessori spoke of the absorbent mind in the first sub-plane as the "unconscious absorbent mind," unconscious, because not anaesthetised but not able to choose, not taking in whatever is around in the environment, not picking and choosing from it, but absorbing it all. The second sub-plane becomes the period of the "conscious absorbent mind." The child now has become able to choose what he or she will do, will accept, from amongst all that the particular environment offers.

It is vitally important that within the family environment and while the absorbent mind is operating, the parents and family realise that they are the examples of grace and courtesy, their actions and behaviour put into the environment for the tiniest child to absorb, first unconsciously. The child's learning, in this first sub-plane of the first plane of development, comes through the human tendencies operating via the absorbent mind. But since the child's mind is not consciously operating, not reasoning, not choosing, not willing, it is imperative that what is given to the unconscious mind should be all that is positive, all that is true and good and beautiful, in movement, in language, in relationships, in actions, in love.

As the child is still in the stage of the unconscious absorbent mind, his exercise of grace and courtesy, of the fine flower of charity, of consideration, of service to others, cannot yet be his own human responsibility. For that his intellect has to be illumined, his will has to be trained to choose the good. Therefore, the responsibility for the child's acts of grace and courtesy rest fully on the parents and family. They are responsible for the prepared environment in which the child can absorb grace and courtesy. If ungrace and discourtesy, if clumsy, rough movements and slovenly behaviour, if loud voices and bad language, if boorish manners and ungracious relationships, if indiscipline and disobedience are the environment in which the young child passes the years of the unconscious absorbent mind, that atmosphere is what he will absorb and on which he will model his behaviour with others.

Does the adult world realise and understand this? Instead of discussing and bemoaning hooligan behaviour, and wondering endlessly what can be done to remedy it, we need to educate adults on the vital significance and importance of the years of the absorbent mind, and more particularly, of the unconscious absorbent mind, as this first phase is the foundation of all the rest of the intellect's development.

If parents do not realise the effect they have on the child's education to grace and courtesy, this is one of the topics which should form part of a school's programme of parent education. If the child only hears you snarling and speaking rudely to your husband or wife, where will he learn to address others graciously? If the child only hears you shouting roughly at him or his brothers and sisters, where can he absorb the soft voice and gentle admonition? And finally, if the child is not reprimanded for the way in which he addresses you, the adult, how is he or she to learn acceptable response?

In my hearing one day in a restaurant, a mother with a three-year-old daughter ordered coffee for herself and milk for her daughter. When the milk came, the little girl took the glass, tipped it a little way and began to spill the milk on the floor. The mother said, "Please don't do that. The milk is for you to drink, not to pour on the floor."

"Back off, Mother, back off!" said the little girl.

"Mary, that's not a nice way to speak to me. I'm your mother," said the adult.

"Did you hear me, mother? I said back off!" answered the little girl.

I left! I did not want to stay to see or hear the end of this scene. This mother apparently did not understand her vital responsibility for her daughter's behaviour, either then or for the future.

And what about movement in the home? Is it thought about in terms of grace, attractiveness, elegance, considerate behaviour? Or is it just a means of getting from here to there? Of going from one room to another, barred by an object that has to be moved out of the way somehow, a door that can be kicked open and slammed shut? Chairs have a point of gravity, if they are to be carried from one place to another, which is lost if they are dragged along by the top of the back. And they become battering rams if carried with the legs sticking out in front of the person carrying – and like battering rams, they can inflict injury at the worst, cause ungainly movement at best.

And what of the child observing this kind of movement? Does the adult recognise any responsibility for an example of inelegant and uncontrolled movement?

Movement has to be learnt as a pattern, controlled by the will and is therefore, in the last analysis, a human responsibility. But it is first the adult's responsibility to put this example into the prepared environment of the family for the child's absorbent mind to take in.

And then another factor – human relationships within the family, to make an environment of love and service for the child to absorb. How is the child going to treat other people – the other members of his family, parents, brothers and sisters, his playmates, if the behaviour of human beings, one to another, is shown to him in his environment as uncouth speech, violence of movement, threatening behaviour, rough commands, shouting, complete non-consideration of the other human beings in the environment? Grace and courtesy, love, service of others, considerateness, gentleness, can only be absorbed and therefore become part of the small child's practice, if these are the qualities put into the prepared environment by the adults in that environment. Grace and courtesy can become the individual's human responsibility only if human responsibility is first accepted by the adult.

We do not need to be trained as Montessorians to prepare an environment of love and service. We do not need money or luxurious possessions. All we need is a recognition of the humanity we share with all other human beings on the earth.

I cannot remember the name of the author or the name of the book which I had read to me as a very young child, but I remember a character called "Mrs. Do-as-you-would-be-done-by." The story, as far as I remember, revolved around that admonition. Society now finds that teaching harder to propose than when this book was written and therefore harder to have accepted. We are in a climate of "me – and my feelings – me first, second and all the time." If "me" is always in the centre, there is no room for other people – there is no room for them in movement because "I" must be first. There is no room for them in communication, in language, because "I" must hold the stage. There is no room for them in relationships because that would detract from my importance. My human responsibility cannot be recognised because "I" am in the way. And, therefore, grace and courtesy can have no place because there is no room for love, the willing of the good of the other.

And so we come back to St. Francis de Sales' definition of courtesy – "the fine flower of charity." If we accept that definition, we have to accept the fact that the essential factor in the prepared environment for the unconscious absorbent mind, the factor without which the prepared environment is merely a combination of material, that essential factor is love. With love as the binding motif of the prepared environment for the unconscious absorbent mind, the first sub-plane of the Planes of Human Development, the foundation is laid for the human being to pass on to forming a realisation of his human responsibility.

We said that each Plane of Development has two sub-planes, the first three years of the plane followed by the second three years completing the plane, making the individual ready to pass to the next succeeding plane. We have considered so far the vital significant first sub-plane of the first Plane of Development. We have said that the first sub-plane sets a pattern, allowing the individual to begin making certain acquisitions. Another factor of significant importance for the individual in the first Plane of Development is the characteristic gift to the human being of the absorbent mind.

This, therefore, also lays on the adult an immense responsibility not to allow this gift to be squandered. The absorbent mind, in its essential nature, belongs only to the first Plane of Development. It forms a unique way of learning, peculiar to the child in the first plane, not possible for the adult. So the responsibility for the adult is to make the environment for the child's absorbent mind a place of grace and caring, of love.

The child passes on to the second sub-plane, the period of the conscious absorbent mind. Now, instead of absorbing without willing and choosing amongst what is offered by the environment, the young child begins to make choices. Now is the time for the adults to help the child develop and strengthen his will, so that human responsibility can begin to be a factor in his realisation. Now he can be challenged to carry out an action more perfectly. "Can you set down the chair without making a sound? I'll show you how – set down one leg at a time." The knowledge must be given to the intellect; then the will can be asked to accept the challenge. When the child is able to accept the challenge, there is a victory for the will and the beginnings of the realisation of human responsibility. "Now I not only can perform an action, moving a chair from one place to another, but I can respect the chair and the action of moving it within the environment, and the good of the other people within the environment, because I can move the chair and set it down somewhere else without disturbing anyone by making a noise."

Of such subtleties are the exercises of grace and courtesy composed. This throws a responsibility onto the trainers of primary Montessori teachers, and onto Montessori teachers of primary Montessori classes, to ensure that we are aware of and emphasize the fine, exact points of grace and courtesy.

I said earlier that I thought that often the exercises of grace and courtesy were the "poor relations" amongst the presentations in the Children's House. "Give the world to the small child," Dr. Montessori told us. She recognised that the world was qualities of colour, shape, dimension, smell, taste, touch and sound. She "incarnated" those qualities in the sensorial material of the *Casa dei Bambini* and invited the child to explore them with his absorbent mind, his senses and his movements. Then, through a succession of exercises and of games, and with language, she led the mind of the child to the idea of the quality, so that he could recognise it without the aid of the material.

But the world is not only sensorial materials and their qualities. It is people and their lives. It is society, it is civilisation that has been built up through the ages, civilisation that started when groups of individual human beings realised that life could be lived more easily through cooperation. Cooperation led to the looking for the good of the society, for consideration for the others in the group. As time went on, a form was invented for ways of dealing with one another – this form in the Montessori Children's House is presented to the children through the exercises of grace and courtesy – it is the core of chivalry.

The exercises of grace and courtesy in the *Casa dei Bambini* cover all the elements the small child needs to know in order to allow him to feel comfortable and secure in dealing with others. Once again, as with all the Montessori activities and material, knowledge is given to the child, and then he is allowed to choose to practise that knowledge. Dr. Montessori asked us to present the action but to destroy the possibility of its being imitated. Once again, an example of the subtlety of Dr. Montessori's teachings.

In the Children's House, the aim is for the child to know how to act in social situations but not to make his act a carbon copy of the one presented. The child's knowledge has to be transmitted to the situation as his knowledge. Only then can it become an act of grace and courtesy; otherwise, it is merely a performance, carried out to order, the order that was implicit in the presentation of the act.

I taught in a convent school in London before I came to the U.S.A. It was a Montessori school and one day a Cardinal of the Catholic Church asked to visit it. The children were prepared for the visitor – told how to address him if they wished to speak with him or show him their work; otherwise, they were just to get on with their work. The Cardinal arrived; most of the children moved to greet him, interested in and anxious to show their knowledge of a new procedure. One little girl stayed at her table working, without taking any notice of what was going on. Later, the Cardinal talked with the teacher of the class. "And that little girl who stayed working at her table?" he asked questioningly. The teacher explained that she had been given the same lessons as the other children on how to greet him and address him.

"I don't know why she did not come to you," she said.

"But why would she?" he asked.

This is what Dr. Montessori meant when she said to destroy the possibility of imitation. The little girl had the requisite knowledge for greeting the Cardinal but had not been told she had to greet him. And he understood!

The exercises of grace and courtesy in the Children's House have to do with movement. They show the child how to move about the classroom, how to move furniture and the Montessori materials, and how to do it while controlling the movement. So the child gradually becomes able to move without making a noise, without harming the materials, without disturbing the furniture or, and more importantly, the other people in the environment.

The aim of these movement exercises is control of movement; not control exercised by authority, but control exercised by the child upon himself; true control, because it is self-control and therefore an act of the will. Human responsibility entails an act of the human will, not demanded or commanded by another, but exercised by the individual human being.

The exercises of grace and courtesy in the Children's House and the preparation for them by the parents before the child goes to school, lead the child to develop respect for the environment and for all that is within it, and through that respect the child comes to recognise that he can serve the environment and serve the human beings who share it with him.

In the exercises of practical life, which are presented to the young child so that he can take care of the environment, there are two stages in the child's activity. The first stage is when the child repeats the procedure that has been shown to him, washing a table, sweeping the floor, dusting the materials, arranging flowers and so on, and does the action because of his own need to be active. The second stage springs from a higher need than just the child's own – this time, to do the action because either the environment or a companion in the class has a need of the action's being done – a table is dirty, the material is dusty, or someone has brought in a bunch of flowers and a vase needs polishing to hold their arrangement. This second stage is the stage of service. And in the final analysis, the exercises of grace and courtesy are not the conforming to a pattern or form that has developed within the culture, within the nation, through the ages, but a development of the idea of the need of service to others who lack something that I can provide.

It is in the *Casa dei Bambini*, during the second sub-plane of the first Plane of Development, that the child begins to glimpse his human responsibility for others. Within the closed, secure, limited environment of the Children's House, his intellect is given the knowledge of those actions which will be of benefit to others. He is shown how to perform them; he is challenged to carry them out more and more gracefully and perfectly, and through having the freedom to repeat them as often as he wishes, they become matter of his intellect as the idea of right behaviour. Thus the idea of correct behaviour, at all times and in all situations, the recognition of service to others in need, the "fine flower of charity," the willing of the good of the other, forms within the child during this time of the absorbent mind and becomes a foundation to build upon during the further Planes of Development.

In this first Plane of Development, the human responsibility rests upon the adult, most specifically the parents. They educate and show the forms of human behaviour, the limits, the cultural codes. They make an environment for the first plane child to absorb. If this human responsibility is not recognised and understood as vital and significant to the child's development to his own knowledge and responsibility, to his own service of others, to his growth in love of them, then will follow the climate of uncaring and, worse, of violence that we have all around us.

But that non-recognition of others is not inevitable. Care of and love for others begins to develop during the first Plane of Development if the adults around the child understand and exercise their human responsibility for their child. They must also recognise and remember that the essential absorbent mind is characteristic of only the first plane.

Around six years of age, a psychological change takes place in the human being. The child begins to enter the second plane of development. The absorbent mind becomes the reasoning mind and works in a different way to gather and form knowledge. The human tendencies are still operative, as they are throughout life, but at this second plane of development they take a different direction from that of the first plane. In the first plane, the child's task was to form himself as an individual, and so all of his faculties were engaged in that task. He had to become an individual before he could begin to realise his place as an individual within a community. The exercises of grace and courtesy were therefore directed toward the individual's ability to explore, sensorially, the facts of human behaviour. It is the individual who is shown how to act with grace and love. If the path of normal human development has been followed, the individual should now be able to begin to develop as an individual within a society of human beings and to recognise that that is what he is. Having been able to use the power of the absorbent mind, hopefully having had the advantage of a prepared environment in which grace and courtesy, consideration and service of others, have brought him to love those others, the child enters the second plane of development ready to further that love and service.

The exercises of grace and courtesy do not belong only to the activities of the *Casa dei Bambini*. They have a special place there and set a pattern, allowing the child to become adapted to his environment and, therefore, to feel secure within it because he has learnt the activities of the society within which he lives and works. The teacher's responsibility is great, therefore, because she has to ensure that the child learns from the behaviour of this society.

Now, as he enters the second plane, not only are his psychological characteristics different from those of the first plane, the human tendencies operate in a different direction; the environment in which he works and studies is different, that work and those studies are different and the role of the adult is different.

"Give the world to the young child," Dr. Montessori told us, and we have considered some of the ways she did this. Then she asked, "What is left for the older child to explore?" And gave this older child the universe, which she said "is an answer to all questions." She wanted the child at the second plane of development to be given a cosmic vision. She believed that this vision would enable him to arrive at the ultimate question for himself at this stage: "Who am I? Have I a role to play in this wondrous universe?"

Exercises of grace and courtesy form part of the work in the school of the second plane child. But they are constructed differently from those given to the child in the *Casa dei Bambini*. The child is not given now the exercises which will construct him as an individual able to operate with knowledge, in a small, secure environment of family and a limited number of peers. At this second plane, he is beginning to move out into a wider environment, an environment of society outside the classroom. He is no longer constructing his individual self, being able to evaluate himself as an individual. Now he begins the construction of himself as an individual member of society. His environment is no longer the Children's House and his family. It must begin now to be the environment of society outside the classroom. His work now is no longer confined to the materials of the *Casa dei Bambini*. His work has to be carried out both within the classroom and outside in society. The presentations of the teacher now have to free him to explore the universe as before he explored the world.

So the exercises of grace and courtesy for this second plane child have to be organised in such a way that they take account of the need for preparation for entrance into this wider society and security of behaviour within it.

The responsibility of preparation still lies with the adult. In the first plane, the adult is the presenter of fact – the behaviour goes like this; the environment is to be cared for like this; other people are to be served in this way; love is to be given to these others to this degree; their need is to be measured and catered for in this manner. In this presentation of fact there is no place for question, no request for reasoning on the part of the child. "This is the way." It is the absorbent mind we are presenting to the child, a sensorial explorer of fact, in this first plane.

But now, at the second plane of development, the approach has to change. The absorbent mind has become the reasoning mind; the child is no longer interested in fact but in reason. The presentations have still to be factual but now given to a child who can reason about them, who can accept the reason for them. The presentations are not to be argued about but can be reasoned about. "This is blue," to the small child, with the material of the colour box.

The small child can say, "The sky is blue," when he has been given the language of the colour box. Now, at the second plane, "The sky is blue – why is it blue?" asks the child.

Now, the same approach with the exercises of grace and courtesy. "We shake hands with another person like this," to the small child of the first plane in the Children's House, showing him how.

Reviewing, you remind the second plane child of the courteous greeting to the teacher at the start of the morning session in school, and then state, "I wonder why we shake with the right hand, why we offer the right hand. Perhaps you could find out."

And later, when they have found out, or after you have given the reason if they have not managed to find out, "I wonder when this custom started?"

The exercises of grace and courtesy for the second plane child have to cover the same areas as for the child in the first plane. The child at the second plane is bigger and tends to lose the graceful, controlled movements of the younger child. Whereas he had been interested in making small, precise movements after he had been introduced to them, the older child tends to become clumsy and ungainly and careless in movement, to rush about and knock things over and to knock into people. Instead of, as in the first plane, being interested in the game of "who goes first?" when two people meet trying to get through a narrow space, and one steps back and allows the other to pass first, now this older child is often interested only in barging through a space first, almost unaware that there isn't room for two bodies at the same time.

Movement now, gracious, controlled movement, movement carried out always with the thought of others, has to be presented in relation to movement within a wider society than the small, secure environment of the *Casa dei Bambini*.

We said earlier that the work of the child now at the second plane has to be carried out by going out into the wider society of the world of life and work outside the classroom. The child now has to explore not the qualities of the world "incarnated" in the sensorial materials of the Children's House, but the Cosmos and the life of humanity within it. Human beings living their lives in the society outside the classroom make an environment of study, of work, of leisure and play, of concerts and art galleries, of colleges and universities, of industry and commerce, into which the child has to move in order to explore.

There is a code of movement to be accepted and used in the different situations in which the child explores. This now has to be presented to him and he is to be challenged to conform to it. Libraries have their rules of silence, concert halls need silence, passengers can be disturbed on public transport by loud voices and rough movements. It is not a case now of presenting the fact that movement should be performed like this and the young child of the first plane accepting it, as his absorbent mind is interested in fact. Now, at the second plane, the child is not interested in fact for fact's sake; he needs reasons. "This kind of movement makes it difficult for others; that is why we need to move carefully, to keep our voices low."

As well as control of movement for the sake of others' comfort, the second plane child must learn control of voice pitch so that others may hear, and that being presented is the protocol of relationships with others in civilised society.

What about elbows when sitting at a table with others? How are peas conveyed to the mouth? Which knife is used first? Who is introduced first to whom? Are hats worn in elevators?

For this second plane child, who responds to reason, the adults' responsibility is to make him aware of why his behaviour matters. "Do as you would be done by." The second plane child, with his reasoning mind, can appreciate reasons, and if he has been trained in the first plane to begin to understand his human responsibility, he can accept the reasons.

This is why the elementary classes in Montessori schools are so important and why they must increase. Reason is becoming important to the individual's development at this second plane. Therefore, the adults' responsibility for training the child to his human responsibility is of the utmost importance and significance at this second plane.

In society this training to responsibility is almost totally ignored. This is a factor which elementary Montessori trainers, Montessori teachers, school consultants, and all who work with Montessori adults, have to recognise and accept.

I do not believe that much blame should be laid upon poverty and deprivation or one-parent families, for lack of manners, for uncivilised behaviour, for the "me first" culture, for the loss of respect for environment and people, or for crime and violence. I believe that blame lies, fully and squarely, upon the adult population. For the most part, adults have resigned their human responsibility for grace and courtesy, and all that is entailed in that concept of human living. Adults have lost the understanding of the place held by grace and courtesy in human civilisation, and therefore we are losing that human civilisation which has been built up through the years that has passed since human beings first appeared on earth.

Human civilisation developed from the realisation that cooperation in societies was necessary if a better life for all was to be achieved. Cooperation entailed a recognition that the weaker members of the society had need of the strength of the stronger. This recognition gradually developed into a code of behaviour, one to another. This recognition held within it the seeds of grace and courtesy, the service of one to another, for respect for the weak, of consideration of others, of "Do-as-you-would-be-done-by," of love and of chivalry.

The development of this considerate code of behaviour of love has to begin in the family environment, has to be instilled into the children by the adults in the family, has to be the responsibility of those adults. If a firm foundation of courtesy is laid in the first plane of development, it will continue into the second plane and can then be developed further.

It is within these two first planes of development that the seeds of chivalry are sown. In the *Oxford Dictionary* chivalry is defined first as a medieval knightly system with its religious, moral and social code, and secondly as honour, courtesy and readiness to help the weak.

In the first plane, the young child is shown how to respect and care for the environment and the people in it, how to behave on social occasions, how to control his movements and his voice, how to look after those younger than himself and how to serve those older. The code of chivalry is there in embryo, and the adults of the environment are there as the stewards of it, but they have to accept that stewardship and their responsibility for it.

At the second plane, the foundations laid in the first plane are strengthened by the repetition of the presentations of grace and courtesy of the first. But an extra element of service is added.

We have mentioned that the environment at the second plane has to be extended to take in the world and society outside the classroom. The work of the child has to include exploration outside the classroom as well as inside it. That exploration has to be not only of the work of society outside the classroom, but also the needs of that society, in order to serve it.

It is the aspect of service of society that is at the core of the exercises of grace and courtesy at the second plane. And it is service that was at the heart of the *Orders of Chivalry* when they were founded. It is still there in the orders, still working, and in their modern successors.

The second plane of development crystallises and sets the pattern of what was introduced in the first plane. The idea of personal responsibility can begin now to be realised. Personal responsibility can begin to enter in with the idea of service to those in need. The second plane child is encouraged to look for the poor, the weak, the friendless, and to ask what he or she can do to serve this need.

This was one of the aims of Mario Montessori for elementary Montessori classes. In one of my last discussions with him about the work of Montessori elementary classes, he told me the story of a boy in Italy who disappeared each lunch time and did not stay to eat with his classmates, who thought he must go home to lunch. One day a friend asked to go with him. But instead of taking his classmate home, they went to see an old, blind man, to whom the first boy read. On their way back to school, he explained to his classmate that the blind man spent all day alone and so he used his lunch time to visit and talk and read to him. This encouraged the second boy to find someone else in need and gradually the idea spread in the class.

The idea of service to the community is growing in the Montessori schools which have elementary classes. This aspect of grace and courtesy, this development of the seeds of chivalry, this appeal to individual human responsibility to be recognised and accepted, all this is vital to the development of the child and has to be undertaken at the second plane.

There are two Planes of Development to follow, to bring the individual to the maturity of the adult. Nothing can be left out of the preparation if this end of human potential is to be achieved. Grace and courtesy exercises are not little activities of the Children's House, to be presented to the children to keep them busy. They are intrinsic to the whole of Montessori education and absolutely essential if human society is to recover civilised behaviour with the code of chivalry as its norm.

One of the strongest characteristics of the second plane child is his need to hero-worship. He needs to be presented with heroic characters, who throughout history have given us models of chivalrous behaviour. These children at the second plane need to be introduced to the ways in which heroes and heroines have served human needs and are still serving them. Television, radio and newspapers present, for the most part, the negatives of life – this tends to make up the greater part of the news. We can help these children explore for heroes and heroines, and make up a positive news programme for the day. Only in this way, by giving these second plane children positive examples of people to emulate, can we show them human responsibility at work, and grace and courtesy practised to the extreme. With this preparation for service, for "Do-as-you-would-be-done-by" exercised to its fullest potential, grace and courtesy can be accepted as the individual's finest responsibility.

But Dr. Montessori considered two other Planes of Development, the third and the fourth, which brought the adult to maturity. She put forward her ideas for "aid to life" in these two planes, just as she had done for the first two planes. Her ideas are revolutionary as were her ideas for the child in the two earlier planes. Unfortunately, she did not live long enough to put her ideas into practice as she did with the Children's House for the first plane and Cosmic Education for the second. Her ideas can be read and studied in her book, *From Childhood to Adolescence*.

At the third plane, grace and courtesy need to be studied in terms of the chivalric ideal in history. If grace and courtesy have been presented, first in the home and then in the Children's House, in terms implicit of service of need; if service of need has been developed and extended at the second plane to encompass society outside the classroom, and the exploration of what my responsibility is to serve the needs of others, here at the third plane, grace and courtesy takes on a new dimension.

At this third plane the child is once again building himself as an individual. At the first plane he began the construction of himself as the individual. This individual construction had to be achieved before he could recognise himself as a member of society. The stronger the construction is at the first plane, the stronger will be the individual member of society. At the second plane, he begins to explore society and to look for his place within it. Now at the third plane the child once again has to construct the individual, but now, not for the sake of himself and the recognition of himself, but now to be able to recognise himself as an individual, bringing his individuality into the service of humanity, the community of individuals. The stronger he is, the stronger will be the community and so humanity.

The idea and the ideal of service that Maria Montessori envisioned in her programme of "aid to life" for children in her schools, and that should have been built up from the family unit through the Children's House to the elementary Montessori school and on into the third and fourth planes, becomes of vital significance at the third plane. This is the plane of the apostolate, of vocation. It is the stage where ideals are paramount. The adults' responsibility now is almost overwhelming. This is the stage when we have to encourage, more and more, service of others as vital to the rebuilding of society and its values.

We have to introduce the adolescent to the great variety of forms of service that may be offered. And once again, as we challenged the child at the first plane with "Can you wash the table without spilling even a tiny drop of water off this edge?" we must now at the third plane challenge, "Can you serve? And go on serving when it becomes hard or monotonous?" Here is the crux for human responsibility. "These people you serve depend on you. They are your responsibility because you chose to serve them." Then the challenge, "Are you going to give up when the going gets tough?"

A priest I met in Lourdes, who had brought with him three hundred elementary-age boys and girls to help with the sick pilgrims, told me the children got up at six o'clock to get their charges up, dressed and ready for the day, and did not finish looking after them until they were in bed. The priest said, "We do not challenge youth enough. Society expects them to behave badly, and so they do. Why are we not challenging them to the positive and the good?" Why not? I ask you.

Do we need to revive the old code of chivalry? If Dr. Montessori's plane for adolescents, the *Erdkinder*, is ever accomplished as she envisioned it, service and responsibility should be its aim.

When Dr. Montessori opened the first *Casa dei Bambini* in Rome in 1907, she spoke of the event as being something of which, one day, the whole world would rejoice. This was greeted with scepticism. But when the first children began to work in the prepared environment, the newspapers of the day wrote of the children as "the converted children," so different were they to what children were thought of as being, so courteous were they and considerate of one another. Dr. Montessori did not agree that they should be termed "new children." She asked if they were not the children that all should be if they were given the right conditions for normal development.

Is it perhaps that at adolescence we are not seeing young people as they should be, because nowhere have they been given the conditions for showing normalized behaviour? As in 1907, when the small children astounded those around, are we waiting now to see the *Erdkinder* show us what society should be? If Dr. Montessori's vision for them were fully implemented, could we challenge young people to join a code of chivalric conduct and service?

We have drugs challenging them, alcohol challenging them, violence and crime challenging them – "come, join us – we're easy – we'll blow you away!"

Can the adolescent at this phase of vocation be challenged by the hard invitation to be of real service to the world, and to accept, through giving that service, his or her human responsibility for the ultimate in grace and courtesy?

Can we all go from this conference with a deeper understanding of what Dr. Montessori offered the children when she gave them the exercises of grace and courtesy? Can we contemplate the idea that perhaps, at this time of crisis of civilisation as there was in the Middle Ages, we should resurrect the code of chivalry, go back to the study of its beginnings, present it to the children when they are old enough to study history, put it before the parents in our parent education classes, adopt it ourselves, and thus make the revolution in society's values that the *Orders of Chivalry* made when they were first founded?

If this could be done, human responsibility would begin to take the place for which it was given to the human species. We would take up again the role for which we were created. ❖

Margaret E. Stephenson studied with Dr. Maria Montessori. In 1960 she was commissioned by the Montessori family to travel to the United States as a trainer for the Whitby School. In 1962 an AMI training center was opened in Washington, DC with Margaret Stephenson as its Director of Training. She was the Director of Training at The Montessori Institute of Milwaukee, Inc. from 1989 to 1995. She currently is an AMI lecturer, teacher trainer, examiner and a member of the Sponsoring Committee.

The Integration of Cultures: The Montessori Contribution

Prof. Dr. Winfried Böhm

Translated by Devan Barker

If I were to begin this presentation with the assertion that Maria Montessori had a global and comprehensive concept of education, I am sure that all the listeners in this large auditorium would, without exception, agree with me. Were I to follow this assertion, however, with the question, "What exactly do the words 'global' and 'comprehensive' mean?" I am just as sure that what would follow would be a great confusion, as every person here would give a different answer. And were I to ask you to write your answers on a scrap of paper, I would be willing to bet that of the around 400 papers, no two would contain the same answer. My assertion would then be revealed as nothing but the vaguest of statements, empty of any real meaning. And so the question presents itself as to whether my assertion could still be seen as a compliment for Maria Montessori and her educational methods, or if it must not rather be interpreted as a sharp criticism, indeed a fatal *coup de grace*. Is it possible that Maria Montessori's concept of education, which at first glance seems so comprehensive and all-inclusive, is upon closer inspection nothing but a simple conglomerate, a patchwork, a tumultuous collage of ideas? Is it possible that it represents a pedagogical stew, a haphazardly and eclectically gathered collection of heterogeneous thoughts which can't fairly be compared to the thoughts of the great educational philosophers? Could Montessori's philosophy be a blank screen which invites each individual to project onto it his or her own most cherished beliefs about education? Israel Scheffler from Harvard would speak here of an educational slogan, something equivalent to an empty glass that can be filled with whatever contents one wishes to pour into it.

These questions are unavoidable when we observe the unparalleled triumph with which Montessori pedagogy has penetrated every corner of the earth and every culture during the last century. The influence and success of Montessori education far exceeds even the worldwide recognition of the ideas of John Dewey. How can this triumph be explained? And what are the reasons that this crescendo hasn't ended after a century, but rather shows all the signs of continuing, banners waving, into the next century? We must ask the hard question: What can it mean to say that Maria Montessori's concept of education is global and comprehensive and has united cultures; has bound the cultures of natural science and the humanities, of experimental research and speculative philosophy, of realistic description of facts and the ethereal production of ideas; woven together the fundamental doctrines of the various religions (from Christianity, to theosophy to Buddhism); joined the rational aspect of mankind with the emotional; meshed the meditation of the Far East with Western Civilization; combined the fight for the rights of the oppressed (women and children) with the disarming struggles for peace and pacifism?

At this point I must clearly state what my attentive listeners will have already noticed. My topic is not derived from the rigors of daily Montessori educational practice, but focuses rather on the educational theories of the Roman university professor, Dr. Maria Montessori. Ladies and gentlemen, by talking about Montessori education in terms of its theoretical roots, we are not talking about something which is light-years distant from the daily practice of Montessori schools. We are rather discussing exactly those principles upon which a Montessori school must be built, if it can be defined at all as a Montessori school; we are articulating exactly those criteria which allow us to judge and evaluate a Montessori school. Let there be no mistake: a Montessori school can only be called a good Montessori school to the degree that it reflects the principles of the educational theory of Maria Montessori. Without the foundation of these theoretical principles, a so-called Montessori school would be a building hanging in mid-air, blown hither and thither by every storm. It is the clarity of these principles which defines the clarity of Montessori education.

The brief time that we have at our disposal makes it necessary that I condense my remarks to two essential points. In the first part of my presentation, I will attempt to clarify what it means to speak of an all-encompassing or total educational concept with regard to Maria Montessori. In the second half of my presentation, I propose to compare Maria Montessori's concept of education with the educational theories of other great philosophers of education, bringing into greater relief the contours of her thoughts while at the same time highlighting their relativity. It is by setting clearly before our eyes the boundaries and biases of her educational theory, that I hope, perhaps paradoxically, to win a better appreciation of Maria Montessori's true significance.

If we agree that Maria Montessori developed a global and comprehensive concept of education, at least one thing becomes clear. First, it is obvious that Maria Montessori's philosophy of education cannot be confined to the boundaries of a didactic method, which one can learn and then apply in educational practice. To reduce Montessori's theories to nothing more than a method would be to hamstring, to cripple them and to amputate the essence of what they represent.

If you are familiar with the publications, the books and the lectures of Maria Montessori, then you know that she struggled against no other misunderstanding or misinterpretation of her work more than she did against the reduction of her theory to a learnable skill or a didactic method. If it is true that her last words were indeed, *Non hanno capito niente!* or "They simply haven't understood anything!" then these words strike at the heart of our problem. In her last public lecture which was entitled, *On the Child*, Dr. Montessori spoke of the greatest disappointment of her life. This frustration, almost disillusionment, consisted of the fact that for 50 years she had done but a single thing, namely, pointed to the *child* and invoked us to look to the *child*. Yet what had been the response of her public and her followers? The whole time, rather than turning their gaze to the child, they had stared, fascinated, at her pointing finger.

What was Dr. Montessori trying to say with this image? She was saying: The object of my attempts and the goal of my efforts has been the *child*, yet my ignorant students have focused only on me, on my pointing finger. *Non hanno capito;* they simply have not understood that the important point is the goal and not the approach taken. Montessori focused on the goal; her followers have focused largely on the method. This is the great misconception which plagued Dr. Montessori her whole life long.

In no place was this more decisively expressed than at the 1937 International Montessori Congress in Cophenhagen. Dr. Montessori had been asked to give the opening speech on the topic of her educational method. The Montessorians who had gathered from throughout the world were more than just a little shocked to hear her begin her speech with the honest admission that she couldn't speak on the topic because she didn't have an educational method and she had never developed one. And even more shocking was her following statement that those who saw in her educational theory nothing but a method had understood next to nothing. To this negative pronouncement, she then added an interesting positive clarification: If anything were to be called a Montessori method, then it must exist in my theory of the normal child.

This unequivocal statement by Maria Montessori – and I could easily produce a whole list of similar comments – should not in the least surprise us, because it was made by a woman of whom even today many people, including her followers, have a false conception. I am grateful to Mrs. Renilde Montessori for setting the record straight regarding her esteemed grandmother at a conference last year in Rome and then, later, at my university in Würzburg. She convincingly demonstrated – and this too was shocking for the thousand or more listeners – that almost no one among Montessori's followers or students had made any effort to ascertain who Maria Montessori truly was. All of them, including her biographers, had created their own ideal person, based not on Montessori, but on what they wanted to see. For the teachers, then, Montessori became the perfect teacher, although she herself had never taught in an elementary or secondary school. For those searching for meaning, she became the great visionary, although to the end of her life she considered her own search unfinished. For those born to be disciples she became the great master, although she hated it when people thought of her as a guru. To parents and kindergarten teachers she became the loving *Kindergarten-Mutti*, although her own life was spent more at her writing desk and lecture pulpit than at the side of children.

Who was she in truth? She was a scholarly researcher and university professor, disciplined through thorough study of medicine and the natural sciences, who saw her mission in promulgating a new understanding of the *child* and promoting a new concept of education. This she did consistently and tirelessly for 50 years.

I would now like to add my own interpretation to our discussion. Montessori thought too highly of the profession of educators to want to patronize them by making them simply technicians of a method. She would have preferred, as was the case with all great educational philosophers, teachers and educators capable of thinking and choosing for themselves, not depending on a crutch or cane to stand on their own two feet.

We can therefore conclude the following as the first result of our ruminations: Montessori's concept of education is, in fact, global and comprehensive in the sense that her theory is indeed a broad theory and not just a method. But what exactly is a theory compared to a method? Method is constructed of two Greek words, *meta* and *hodos* which translate literally as "the way toward" and, therefore, asking the question regarding the way is only meaningful if one knows beforehand who wishes to arrive where. If, for example, I as a foreigner were to ask about the best way within the United States, the question would be dumb and senseless and you would be unable to give me an intelligent answer without knowing first where in your wonderful country I wish to go. There are many ways within the United States, not just one, and which one is best depends on the destination one desires. Such is also the case with education. There are many methods, not just one, and which one is best depends on my conception of the *child* and what end I wish to realize. To ask which method is once and for always the best is a dumb and senseless question. To ask it is to demonstrate a complete lack of understanding regarding education: *Non hanno capito niente!* A theory of education must not be reshaped into a method; rather, a theory must embrace three dimensions. It must include a precise concept of the subject of education, who is to take the path, and a clear understanding of the destination to be reached at the end of the path. The clarification of the subject, or definition of the *child*, is called "anthropology" from the Greek words *anthropos* (mankind) and *logos* (study of), while a statement regarding the aims of education is called "teleology" from the Greek words *telos* (aim) and *logos* (study of).

If you take the time to study the publications of Maria Montessori thoroughly and carefully, you will find confirmed on every page that she speaks more about the *child* and the aims of education, than she does about the *how*, or the method. And I would be remiss not to mention at this point that Montessori's first and, from a scholarly perspective, most fundamental book carried the title: *Pedagogical*

Anthropology, a book which she wrote many years before she established her first children's house. Interestingly, her last and most essential book titled, *The Formation of Man* also deals exclusively with educational aims, not with method.

I am certain that you are all acquainted with Maria Montessori's anthropology, her vision of the *child*; and with her teleology, her concept of educational aims. Nevertheless, I would like briefly to review the main ideas and central concepts to refresh your memories. As you well know, Maria Montessori starts with the hypothesis that each and every child, even in its embryonic state, is endowed with an inborn blueprint and with it, an inner drive mechanism which Dr. Montessori described with the Greek word *horme* which is similar to our Latin word, *motor*. This blueprint and this developmental motor are not part of the child by mere chance, but rather – and this is her second principle hypothesis – they are placed in the child by God himself at the moment of the child's conception. Montessori speaks often of God also as the "heavenly geometrist," through which she hopes to express the idea of God as the all-powerful cosmic architect who has designed the complete plan for every part, every person, in the cosmic evolution. In the same way that He, in His foreknowledge and planning, has placed the stars of the heavens each in its eternal orbit in the universe; so has He also assigned every individual his or her place on earth and lot in life through the imminent blueprint and the *horme*.

Obviously, no one has ever seen someone with a built-in blueprint and no mechanic has ever serviced the developmental motor of a child. I am also reasonably certain that no one has ever peeked over God's shoulder as He installed this blueprint or this motor. No one has ever observed these things because it is not of things that we are speaking, but rather of ideas, and ideas cannot be observed, only thought. That is why we are speaking of Montessori's educational theory. And obviously she came upon this theory by no other means than through thought, specifically new thoughts about the *child*.

Maria Montessori was fascinated by these new ideas about the *child*, and in a very important essay in her writings entitled *God and the Child* she described in detail how the pedagogical revolution that she started came about. Old-fashioned educators believed that they had to form the child like a clump of modeling clay. That is to say, they wanted to fill the child with learning and values as one would fill an empty glass and they believed, since time immemorial, that all of the spectacular educational successes could be attributed to their ability and their hard work. Montessori's concept of the child put the whole situation in a different light. "Educationists ought rather to have investigated the wonderful powers of divine creation in the child's soul. It was the nature of the child himself that was worthy of their admiration, rather than a method which was merely an adaptation to those inner, divine 'directives' which govern the natural course of development." Indeed, this single sentence contains Montessori's Copernican-like revolution in education. No more was the educator the sun whose light beamed upon the child. Rather the child itself contained all of the solar energy needed for its development. Development or, more exactly, the "natural course of development" is, therefore, the key concept of Montessori pedagogy. This concept moves the secret and the goal of Montessori education beyond the two hypotheses previously explained because with it education can no longer be the design of an adult to mold or shape a child. Rather, the task of the educator is changed 180 degrees. It is to clear all the barriers, provide all the necessary help, and place at his disposal all the necessary resources of the environment that the child needs in order to follow the exigencies of the inborn blueprint and the hormè; to bring to completion the "natural course of development" and in the end to become a normally developed human being.

Suzanne Gunkel, one of my former doctoral students, has recently published a book wherein she identifies four basic principles characteristic of teaching according to Montessori's ideas. First is the principle of an internally defined development of the child. Think of the inborn blueprint, the dynamic force of *hormè*, the absorbent mind, or the sensitive periods of development. The second principle is that of the child's freedom. The third principle regards self-directed activity and the fourth, possibly most significant, is the principle of indirect education.

Here is where we come to the core of Montessori's thought. For if a person, that is every individual person, could develop normally and become a fully normal human being, which for Montessori meant a perfect or complete human being, then not only would the individual people be the best possible, but all human societies, and nature itself, indeed the whole world would be perfected. All personality disorders and social tensions would disappear in a puff, ushering in an eternal kingdom of peace, untroubled unity with nature, and a reign of spiritual harmony with the cosmos.

Ladies and gentlemen, as I describe this highest pinnacle in the cathedral of Maria Montessori's thoughts, it becomes unmistakably clear that the admirable professor has placed herself miles from daily educational practice and soars as if on angel's wings in the heavens of Utopia. No realistic or clear-headed educator can earnestly believe that child suffering, misery, poverty, violence, war or natural disaster can be done away with simply as a result of the natural, healthy development of children. And naturally Professor Montessori, as a well-trained and educated scientist, did not consider it a realistic prognosis either. Rather, she was fully aware of the Utopian character or, perhaps better said, the theoretical character of her thoughts and her visions.

* * *

That said, I have arrived at the second part of my presentation. This second section will be much shorter because I want only to briefly compare and contrast Maria Montessori's educational theory with the theories of a few other great educational philosophers of a similar caliber. Please note, I am speaking of a comparison between various theories of education, not between various educational methods. My question is therefore not, "Is there a method which is by chance more effective or more efficient? Is there one by means of which I can stuff the child with more knowledge or more useful values? Is there a method by means of which I can better socialize the child and prepare it for future gainful employment?" My question is instead, "Are there similar sweeping visions of the child and of education? Are there pedagogical greats who have climbed to the same heights as Maria Montessori? Who are they and what did they have to say?"

Looking back over almost three thousand years of western educational history, I see only five other theories of early childhood education which can be placed alongside Maria Montessori's. The first of them is from the Swiss educator, Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi. During the beginning waves of industrialization and in the face of the disintegration of the traditional large families and their replacement by the nuclear family, he became an energetic defender for the ideals of motherly education and for preserving the family structure. For him, kindergarten could only have a subsidiary function to the disappearing family education, and every kindergarten teacher must therefore be modeled professionally on the ideal of the mother. It was typical for mothers, in Pestalozzi's eyes at least, first to satisfy the elementary needs of the child, then to play or work, and then to discuss thoughtfully with the child what had just been done.

At the beginning of the 19th century, as the first infant schools were established with upwards of 150 children per class, a new educational theory appeared. The German philosopher of education, Johann Friedrich Herbart promoted his conviction that children's education was principally an issue of learning elementary lessons. The content of the lessons must be designed around imparting fundamental knowledge according to its constituent elements, that is, broken down into easily understandable pieces. He developed the so-called curriculum spiral and elementary learning because he believed that the behavior of a child could be controlled largely through instilling correct attitudes and understandings in the same way that the data in a pre-programmed computer can be called up and printed out. This theory might seem modern to you; in reality, however, it is over 200 years old.

More than any other, the Geneva born Jean-Jacques Rousseau rebelled against the idea that adults must decide what things a child is to learn and how they are to be learned. He considered it an intolerable pretension and an unpardonable arrogance on the part of adults that they wanted to define how a child's education should look or what a child should learn. In contrast to the theory of learning, he proposed a theory whereby children should simply gain experience, each according to its individual nature, and thus come to master the world by experience, not through a synthetic or forced process of "learning."

Maria Montessori, who was well-acquainted with the philosophies of Rousseau, raised certain objections. She agreed with him in principle that one must allow a child to become engaged and active in experiences, but it seemed to her that Rousseau wanted to allow the child to become independent in only a superficial and partial way. For even though the child could have its own experiences, it was still the role of the adult to arrange and stage the desired experiences – desired, however, only by the adult. Montessori was far more radical when she proposed that the child needed no such behind-the-scenes arrangements because it already contained an inborn blueprint and a developmental motor. One needed only to assure that the child develop normally and healthily according to these God-given and, therefore, divine powers.

The next theory stems from a German philosopher and casts a light which illuminates the perspective inherent in Montessori's thought. Friedrich Fröbel, the inventor of the Kindergarten, explored the relationship between the individual and the world in a deeply philosophical way. He came to the conclusion that this dynamic between man and his world cannot be a single, linear, one-dimensional relationship; rather, it must be a double-sided or dialectical relationship. The idea of learning only described the process of the outer world being internalized, while the concept of development dealt only with the process of an inner potentiality being realized outside; whereas, for Fröbel, it was in the concept of *play* that he recognized human activity which brought the outer world in and expressed the inner world outwardly, all at the same time. Therefore, for Fröbel, all education had to be game-like, couched in the medium of play.

The most recent theory chooses yet another point of departure. Personalism, an educational philosophy born in France during the third decade of this century, has as its goal the emancipation and self-responsible autonomy of the human person. The concept of person is understood as that intersection of reason, free choice and language which characterizes man (and woman) and sets them apart from every other creature. Education for this theory means the awakening and fostering of reason, free choice and language. Those things are therefore pedagogically correct which encourage a child from early on to become more reasonable, more free and more communicative.

Now, at the end of my presentation, I would like to invite you to participate in one last thought experiment. Imagine, please, that on this stage stand the eminent representatives of six theories we have mentioned: Pestalozzi, Herbart, Rousseau, Montessori, Fröbel; I would like to represent the most recently named theory of personalism, which I have defended in many books, including some here in the United States. And let us imagine that each of these representatives holds a large banner in his or her hand. In large letters on Pestalozzi's banner, the words *Mother* or *Family* are written. On Herbart's is the word *Learning*, while Rousseau's says *Experience*, and Montessori's carries the motto *Normal Development*. On Fröbel's banner is the word *Play* and on mine the words *Perfectability of the Human Person*. If you had to choose which banner you would follow, which would it be? And, perhaps more importantly, why?

I personally think that before you make a decision you should listen carefully to what each representative has to say, thinking carefully and patiently about the reasons they give. Only then, after having studied all six thoroughly and completely, should you decide. But for which will you decide?

Here is my answer, perhaps somewhat unexpected. You should choose none of them, but should choose rather your own thinking in this regard. But your own thinking must not be arbitrary, your opinions not simply pulled from the air. Your ideas must be honed on these six theories of education and must depart from the groundwork they have laid because each of these theories is, in its way, true. The family is just as important as the person, experience just as important as play, development just as important as learning. A wise and well-trained educator must not neglect a single aspect, if he or she does not wish to "offend one of these little ones."

So what is the startling conclusion to my presentation?

I probably presented a perspective that you were not expecting. I showed you that Maria Montessori's concept of education is indeed global and comprehensive because it does not limit itself to a method but, rather, includes an elaborate anthropology and teleology, a definition of man and his aims. One would do her a grave injustice to view her as the developer of a method rather than the mother of an inclusive educational theory. Montessori's concept of education is capable of integrating the various cultures because, at its core, a fundamental vision of human experience is described which all men and women in the world could share and accept. That vision is a faith in the divine powers of children to exercise healing influence upon individuals, societies and the whole world as they thirst for their own developmental opportunities. Given, this is not a didactic method but a theoretical vision – a vision of Utopian fascination...

With that vision, however, Maria Montessori joins the ranks of the great educational philosophers of all time, and gains the notoriety of immortality. The developers of methods and the great practitioners of education are admired and honored for awhile, but when their time is past, they are quickly forgotten. The creators of great educational ideas and visions, however, constantly pull us with them into the future, and Maria Montessori's vision of a fully normal child is, in fact, a great vision of an ideal future – unbelievable, yet true.

Let me now end my presentation on a rather bold note, at least as bold as Maria Montessori's own thesis. The mission of Maria Montessori and the mission of her physical and spiritual heir, Mario Montessori, whose hundredth birthday we celebrate today is far from over. It will never have an end, for the vision of a fully normal child is eternal and without end, even if in reality there has never been a single normal man, fully developed, and this vision therefore remains Utopian. This vision would retain its inspiring and direction-giving power even if there were not a single educator in the whole world who practiced the Montessori Method. However, and this is my last point, whoever has understood the whole provocative content of Maria Montessori's educational vision can never teach in the same way again, independent of what method they use. If we understand this, and if we conceive of her educational theory in this manner, then possibly, Maria Montessori could eventually say of us: *Grazie a Dio, finalmente mi hanno capito;* "Thank the Lord, they finally understood me." ❖

Winfried Böhm, Ph.D., Director of the Institute of Education, University of Wurzburg, Germany, holds a doctorate in education and an honorary doctorate in philosophy from the University of Córdoba, Argentina. He is an internationally recognized authority in educational philosophy and has taught at numerous universities in Europe Africa, Asia and North and South America. He is the author of twenty-eight books and more than three hundred articles, published in various languages. His involvement with Montessori scholarship includes monographs, translations, and collected works. For the last ten years he has served as President of the *Deutsche Montessori Gesellschaft* affiliated with AMI.

All Day Montessori: The Role of Grace and Courtesy

Laura Morris

Three years ago Northwoods Montessori School opened its first full-day classroom. The class we refer to as full-day is one in which the primary children remain in the same environment all day. This approach gives consistency to those children for whom the school day does not end at 3:00. In the summer 1996 issue of *The NAMTA Journal*, Vol. 21, No. 3, pp. 70-77, I described the process our school went through in developing this program. In this article I told about the two-year study our faculty made before we decided to implement a full-day class. I shared many of our concerns and how we dealt with them. I described openly the trial-and-error approach we took in experimenting with our full-day program.

During the 1996-97 school year we evaluated our full-day program to determine if we were meeting the goals we had set and to look closely at those issues that concerned us about this type of program. The evaluation was a collaborative effort compiled by Gail Borden, Director of Education, with input from Carol Alver, AMI consultant in the spring of 1996, Beth Samples, Executive Director, and Laura Morris, full-day primary teacher.

The evaluation showed that this program, by definition, helped us to meet two of our goals. One was to provide a more consistent environment and to provide it with fewer externally imposed transitions. Secondly, the concerns we had about maintaining AMI standards were answered in the 1996 consultation report. Carol Alver wrote, "The continuity offered here is an excellent model." She added, "This class has the real essence of the AMI pedagogy because of the relaxed unhurried tenor of the day – there is no need to get things done." Those were just two of the issues we discussed in determining the value of this program. As a school we decided our full-day class is meeting a need in our community. We are currently studying the feasibility of further implementation.

One concern I often hear is how this program affects the role of the directress. My hours are from 8:30 until 5:00, and we have an assistant who is alone with a few children during the hour before I arrive and the hour after I leave. During this time the children may assist with setting up in the morning or cleaning up the room in the afternoon. They can also choose individual work on a subject for which they have already had a lesson. Many people ask me if I feel my hours are too long or how I manage. This came as somewhat of a surprise. No one ever asked me that when I worked in the corporate world. The pace of our day and the way of life in our class are such that I have time for everything I need to do. When everyone is engaged in work I take time to record lessons or write a note to parents. One of the greatest things that full day has afforded me is the opportunity to sit down and observe my class. When I worked until 3:00, I always felt there wasn't enough time, that I should prioritize giving lessons over making observations. I have learned more from my observations than I would ever have imagined. I don't think of my time in the class as work; it is just a part of my life. It requires commitment and energy, but so does anything worthwhile. The commitment required to teach in a full-day class is so minor compared to that of the directress in the *Casa* in San Lorenzo.

In her inaugural address Maria Montessori told her audience: "The directress is always at the disposition of the mothers, and her life, as a cultured and educated person, is a constant example to the inhabitants of the house, for she is obliged to live in the tenement and to be therefore a co-habitant with the families of her little pupils." (Montessori, 1912/1964, pp.61-61).

I would like to share with you some aspects and observations of our full-day class that help to show the essence of our full-day program.

Time to Work

Early one morning I entered my class and a child was already busy polishing a chair. He finished it and then chose another chair. After he had polished a third chair he came to me and asked for more polish. I thanked him for helping to take such good care of our class and he said, "Oh, I'm not finished." As he looked around the classroom, I realized it was his goal to polish all of our chairs. I showed him how to refill the polishing jar that accompanied his work and sent him on his way. I observed him as he went from chair to chair. At one point he said to another child, "Excuse me, will you sit in this chair so that I can polish yours?" The child moved to the chair that had already been polished. They both went back to work, talking and working until it was time for him to move on to another table. When he finished this task he did not come to me and say, "Look what I've done." His work was not done for attention or approval. It is amazing to see a child take on an enormous task and complete it with such pride. Nothing I said to him meant as much as his own sense of accomplishment.

Time to Play

With the luxury of time on our side, work has been extended. Cultural studies have given us opportunities to role-play. From time to time our snack area will change to incorporate areas of cultural studies. A low table, chop sticks, Asian art and rice can transform our snack area into a stage for role-play. There are many areas that are enhanced by the added hours. The level and amount of art, music and movement has increased dramatically in my class.

One area with which I continually evaluate is the non-Montessori manipulatives.

The Montessori classroom provides the child with opportunities to move and be physically active. We must remember that we are not asking children to sit in desks all day. Montessori wrote: "If we would but think of it, the carrying out of practical life affords an abundance of exercise, and the gymnasium for perfecting one's actions is the very environment in which he lives." (Montessori, 1967, p. 81)

Daily Rituals

One of the most pleasant times of day is lunch in our class. This has not always been my experience. When my day ended at 3:00, lunch was a necessity we had to get through in order to get to the important things like lessons. What a lesson I have learned. Lunch has become an unexpected joy. We have begun to eat by candlelight on china plates. The atmosphere is not that of a five- star restaurant but it is quite nice. Two children set the table during the morning work period so that when we are ready to eat the tables are prepared. There is no need to rush through our meal; conversation and food are enjoyed fully. I have learned a great deal from the children during lunch from having an opportunity to engage in meaningful conversations with them. It also affords us another occasion to practice grace and courtesy.

We have a diverse community. Many cultures are represented in our class. This is an area that is highlighted at lunch. On any given day you may see a table where a child is eating a hotdog, another eating plantains and yet another eating sushi. This has given us a great opportunity to discuss many different cultures. Our children see first hand that, although we are each different one from another, we all have basic needs such as the need for food. Seeing how different people meet this need has helped the children to develop acceptance and interest for people of different lands.

Time Alone

One afternoon I noticed a child sitting in the garden. After about ten minutes I went to observe more closely, thinking, "I need to connect her with work." With time on my side, I have learned to observe before I speak. Amy (a three-year-old) was sitting motionless, her breathing almost unnoticeable. She had an incredible smile on her face as a chipmunk scurried between her feet. The chipmunk made three trips to the bird feeder and back to Amy while I observed. Amy never knew I was in the garden. Her attention was on watching the chipmunk and making silence. How grateful I was for not interrupting her. I discovered the silence game could be an individual work as well as a group activity. I also was reminded that a child doesn't always have to have a material in their hand to be engaged in meaningful work.

Our garden is available at all times. Children are invited to bring work outside or just to sit and enjoy some quiet time surrounded by nature. Margot Waltuch wrote about her first class at *La Maison des Enfants*, "There was not a separation between outdoors and indoors. They were treated as one. No division should exist." (1996, pp. 44) This has also been the case for our full-day class. The benefits of free and open access to the outdoors have been a great asset to our environment.

As the primary directress in a full-day class, I am often asked to describe our class. The image that comes to my mind is of being at my grandmother's home. She lived in a small community in the mountains of Virginia. I spent the summer with her when I was twelve. What I remember from that time is a way of life that I cherish. There was an easy grace to our days, unlike the hurried pace of my life at home (I was one of five children with working parents). I can remember being grateful for the routines we had for cooking and cleaning. I loved the rituals of meal times and special occasions. Most of all I enjoyed the luxury of time. There was plenty of it. I could take as long as I needed to finish a task and always felt that the job I had completed was well done. There was time to work and time to play, time to socialize and time to be alone just watching the grass grow. The unhurried tenor of those summer days, the security of the routines, the sense of community I felt gave me the feeling that I was living life rather than just racing through it. When I observe my class and reflect on my day, I often experience the same level of peace I had in those mountains.

That was twenty-one years ago. I'm back home in Atlanta, Georgia, and the pace of life here continues to quicken, but unlike many who live here, I have a place to go where I can shift to a slower pace and live life to its fullest: Northwoods Montessori School. ❖

References

Montessori, M. (1964). *The Montessori Method*. New York: Schocken. (Original work published 1912).

Waltuch, M. (1996). The Casa of Severs, France. *The Namta Journal*, 21(3), 44.

Montessori, M. (1967). *The Discovery of the Child*. Ballantine Books. pp.81.

Laura Morris holds an AMI primary diploma from the Montessori Institute of Atlanta and has seven years of classroom experience. She is directress of the all day class at Northwoods Montessori School in Atlanta, Georgia.

Grace and Courtesy: A Foundation for Moral Development

Kay Baker, Ph.D.

Abstract

An exploration of the progression of the exercise of grace and courtesy from simple manners to human morality is the topic of this presentation. Because work alongside others is the form in which human beings form their personalities, it is imperative that grace and courtesy be practiced in order for the work to occur. As grace and courtesy are practiced by all in the community, good work habits arise, and people of sound moral character emerge.

The moral development of human beings is a topic much thought about and discussed throughout human history. The word moral comes from the Latin *moralis*, meaning of manners or customs. Although its etymology would suggest that morality has to do with etiquette, the common meaning of morality is the ability to distinguish right from wrong. Nonetheless, there is a close link. Etiquette derives meaning from practices that become the norm just because they are mindful of others' rights. Manners and customs that lend themselves to harmonious living are the right thing to do in human relations. The exercises of grace and courtesy found in the Montessori environment clearly show this link. First one sensorially, then consciously, experiences harmonious living through acts that in themselves are cognizant of right from wrong in terms of living with others. Since we in the Montessori class are concerned with the development of human beings, what does it mean for a person to be morally developed? It means that there exists within the person a consciousness of right from wrong. It further means that this person, when faced with the choice, chooses the right and turns away from the wrong. This can be stated as the ability to live in harmony with others.

Who sets the standard by which one is to assess moral development? There are codes of behavior in all cultures: the *Code of Hammurabi*, the *Torah*, the *Ten Commandments*, the *Koran*, to name a few. These codes continue to be presented to us, many in the form of religious practice. Books of etiquette and manners are widely known and consulted when faced with a question of the proper manners in a certain situation. In many current newspapers one can read *Miss Manners*, the current sage on manners. Many answers concerning manners, customs and morals have been given throughout the ages.

People through the ages have also pondered the development of morality in children and have expressed different theories of moral development. No matter whether the proposed theory focuses on the enforcement of a code of conduct or reasoning about moral situations, the fact is that it is the adult who establishes the moral standard and brings the child along to this point of view. Now if the child in question is compliant, this approach is successful. But if the child is not compliant, this approach may not be successful. Is there any other way? Verily, a better life is lived by the moral person. The question is this: Can we avoid the issue of a compliant versus a non-compliant child? Can we attend to moral development without preaching a moral code? The question appears for each of us as we confront a new life, a child who begins the human journey anew. We are given some help for our questions by Maria Montessori. I propose some thoughts on moral development based on Maria Montessori's guidance. First, we look at Montessori's views on human development, within which moral development occurs.

Among Maria Montessori's many legacies, her idea that we should continually look at the child, the human being in the process of development, is an idea to which we should pay full and wholehearted attention. It is our duty to observe the child because observation of the child is the very foundation of all the work proposed for Montessori classes. While Montessori's observations and analyses serve us well with regard to the child, we must verify for ourselves so that we can with confidence serve the child.

Who is the child that we are to observe? The child is an undeveloped human being, and each individual child must develop by constructing or building a human personality. (From the Latin *com+struere*: to pile up, build; Old English: *streaven*: to extend, to stretch out.) How is this construction achieved? It is achieved, as is true of any construction, by means of work within a human environment. Further, the end result of the construction of an individual human personality has two aspects: individual and social. Therefore, one can say that the process of human development is the expected construction of the human personality, both as to the self and as to the other. Moral development, the ability to live in harmony with others, is a consequence of this construction.

The topic of this conference, *Grace and Courtesy: A Human Responsibility*, addresses this question of moral development because it focuses on the construction of the social human being. Grace and courtesy are terms used to describe acts which reveal what are harmonious social relations among human beings. The terms will therefore signal actions performed by the child that aid the development of the social self, the ability to live in harmony with other human beings. This in turn aids the development of the moral self, for to choose the right from the wrong creates harmony in social relations. However, it would be remiss not to mention the necessity of harmony among all things, living and non-living, in the universe. Yet that is a topic for another day. Only the social relationships of the human being will be discussed.

As has been said, the construction of the human personality consists of the development of the self and the development of the social self. Without ignoring the parallel construction of the individual self, this paper will focus on the construction of the social self. Two questions come to mind. How does this process of social construction occur? How does this process best occur? Many questions flow from these. If social means to live with the other, what effect does *the other* have on the construction of the child? Further, does the child require assistance from an adult? If so, what is the nature of this assistance? Maria Montessori tells us that the answers to questions about the development of the human being lie in examining the nature of the human being. It will be seen that moral development is embedded in the development of the human personality.

The Four Planes of Development

Montessori presented for our continuing authentication a schema for the process of human development – the four planes of development, encompassing approximately the first 24 years of life. These planes of development, four stages of approximately six years each, are a series of stages in a child's life that begin with the non-constructed self and end in the mature human being.

In all four planes of development the construction of the social self occurs. This development, although described in stages, forms a continuum. Each developmental acquisition is, so to speak, a brick in the building of the human personality. A finely constructed brick wall is a useful image of development – every brick in place, straight, mortared with the proper cement, altogether forming a sturdy wall. If any part is lacking, the resulting wall is less strong. Although the wall may stand, it is more subject to stresses and even collapses. In Maria Montessori's theory, each of the four planes has unique characteristics that support the development of the social human being. What are these characteristics manifest in each plane?

The First Plane of Development

The first plane of development consists of two substages, each approximately three years in length. For the infant in the first three years of life, actions of grace and courtesy are present in the environment, absorbed, and contribute to the construction of the social personality. The infant is not performing acts of grace and courtesy as one might think of such acts. Yet if the acts of grace and courtesy are not present in the infant's environment, the necessary social construction of the first plane cannot occur.

What is the necessary social construction of the infant? One aspect of the construction of the social self that occurs is the construction of the stability of human social relations. The acts of grace and courtesy that contribute to this construction consist of continuous attention and care. By virtue of not being abandoned, the child absorbs the idea of not abandoning. This is a critical feature of social life – one does not abandon, one does not leave a friend in need, one takes care of others. This idea of social relations is inculcated in the infant through having the experience of total care. Anything less reduces the absorption of this part of human social life – that one does not abandon. As the child approaches the end of this substage, a consciousness of others in the environment emerges. For example, a child around three can be observed offering objects to others.

For the child in the second three years of life, acts of grace and courtesy continue to be present in the child's environment. The adults in the child's environment treat the child with respect and continue to give loving care. But now the child is capable of acts of grace and courtesy. So the adult can begin to bring the child to a consciousness of acts of grace and courtesy. The child has enough of a consciousness of others to follow the direction of an adult with respect to acts of grace and courtesy. "You may have one." "You always walk around a work mat." A feature of the social self that occurs in this stage is the construction of the necessity of human social relations within the limits of the child's immediate environment. A person has to do certain things in order to live alongside another in the here and now. But there is more than prohibition to acts of grace and courtesy. "Please tie Mary's shoe." Again, this is a critical feature of constructing the social self. I am here but not alone. Another needs some help, and I am able to help.

The necessity of social relations within a limited environment is brought to consciousness through having the experience of continuing individual nurturing and direction by the family and the adults in the *Casa dei Bambini*, but within a social context of peers. Having peers present in a child's environment during this substage makes the difference. The child at this substage still perceives the adult as one who is giving total care. Of course, the child learns to greet the adult and respect the adult, but the notion of constructing the self in relation to the other is best accomplished by means of relating to peers. Only the peers can say, "No, you must take only one!" "You can't walk on my mat." Only a peer can be in a position of need that a small child can satisfy. After all, Mr. Jones can tie his own shoe. The role of the adult is to create the social context within which the children – peers – help one another construct this social awareness. The adult is still needed at this stage to prepare the environment, to present the exercises of grace and courtesy, to nurture the construction of the individual child, but not to be a scold. If only the adult enforces the rules of social relations, the child is abandoned before the construction of the self is adequately served in this first plane of development.

The Second Plane of Development

In the second plane of development, the child from approximately six years of age to 12 years of age is ***consciously*** creating the social self. If the construction of the self in the first plane of development has occurred, the child entering the second plane of development is a person who has established good social relations with peers and with adults in the child's immediate environment. This child not only knows what not to do but has an empathy with others present. This empathy is often seen after a period of concentration, when the child in the *Casa dei Bambini* may have an empathetic encounter with another child. The child around six years of age enters the plane with a predominate sense of the self moderated by the knowledge that I must sublimate certain desires in order to live among others, the knowledge that I *can* help others, and even with the desire to help others from time to time.

The idea of working together, consciously and cooperatively, is to be brought to consciousness in this second plane of development. But there is more. If one were only to take care of those in the localized environment, most of us would not have the things we need in order to live. The construction of the social self that occurs in this plane is the construction of the necessity of human social relations extended to those outside the immediate environment. A person has to do certain things in order to live in this universe. What a person does not only affects those in one's immediate environment but also affects persons not present, and perhaps even those not yet born.

For this constructive task the child again needs both adults and peers. Adults are present to give the child the ability to know about all of human life within the universe; peers are present to practice working together consciously and cooperatively. From the point of view of individual construction, the child of the second plane must still be centered in the self. It is quite all right that the child in the second plane of development still think that adults and peers are present to meet *my* needs. It is a point of arrival that the child construct the social sense to the point of consciously knowing that one can meet the needs of others. It is not necessary to demand that this child want to meet the needs of another. The construction of the social self in this plane is that I ***can*** meet the needs of another. In addition, I can and do affect persons not present either in time or space.

In summary, the first and second planes comprise the two stages of childhood and should therefore be seen as a unit. The normal construction of the individual self and the social self occurring in childhood is one that results in a human personality that can and does acknowledge the existence and the needs of the other. The construction of the individual self is of great importance. There is no melding of all individuals into a single human personality. But the constructed individual self knows about others, wants to be with others, and knows how to be with others. Such an individual has a better chance to continue to develop into a mature human being, a social human being.

The Third and Fourth Planes of Development

Social development continues in the third and fourth planes of development. In the third plane, the major focus of social development is to learn to live with those who are no longer primarily charged with nurturing these adolescents as individuals. Rather, it is the adolescent who chooses to nurture the self in ways meaningful to the individual, while simultaneously being aware of and taking care of others in the environment. It is for the adolescent to reciprocally care for the adults present in the environment whilst still receiving care and gaining knowledge from adults as mentors and guides. It is for the adolescent to care for peers whilst taking comfort in their knowledge and support. In the fourth plane of development, the major focus of social development is turned outward. The person in the fourth plane of development works in the service of the self and the other. This person deepens a field of interest and sees this interest as both serving my needs and the needs of others. This maturing person often turns away from one's own personal interests as the necessity to serve arises. The outcome of this plane – the mature human being – is then one able to guide the development of children.

The Outcome of Development Over the Four Planes

An assumption of Montessori's theory is that part of one's life is lived as a human being who can assist the development of the children of the next generation. In order to do this adequately, the human being must achieve maturity. This is why Montessori talks about the development of the *new teacher* who is then able to guide children. This new teacher is assumed to be the result of a constructed social self, a person able not only to live in harmony with the universe but a person who can assist the child to live in harmony with the universe. The development of the Montessori teacher seems then to be an even higher construction of the social self, which is to say, a complete awareness of the other and a willingness to subjugate the self as necessary. While the development of the adult guiding the child may be considered a side issue to the topic at hand, the consequence to the child is of great importance. Without the development of mature human beings who have the interest of the other as a guiding force, adults able to guide children may not be available to children.

What are the Helps to Social Development in Childhood?

As can be inferred from the previous discussion, the child in the first and second planes of development needs assistance in the process of construction of the social personality. Furthermore, in all planes of development, it is the individual who does the construction. The infant works in an absorptive process; the young child practices acts of grace and courtesy with more and more awareness and empathy for others in the environment.

Therefore, work is the key to the construction of the social human being. The very choice of the word *construction* signifies work. The wall is not constructed unless the individual works to construct it. Although it is the individual who does the work of self-construction, this work is accomplished within human society, first within the family unit and then within an ever-expanding human society.

What is the work to be done? How does the work get started? The idea that one is to work comes from the human society into which one is born. The knowledge that one is to work, and the process of work, must be assisted because the human personality comes to be only through the process of work; the human personality who knows how to work, to construct the self, is not present at birth. This is the great power of the human being – to construct the self and not to be driven by instinct. When you think that a human being can adapt to all kinds of environments, you have this condition of life to be thankful for. The condition is that the human being has to work. It seems that the infant does the necessary work unconsciously. But when the consciousness awakens, it seems that the work the child does needs to be done under conditions conducive to development. Work is most constructive when done in a prepared environment under the guidance of knowledgeable adults.

There are several specific helps that can be given: the company of other human beings, a suitable environment that is designed to accommodate particular characteristics and sensitivities within a plane of development, knowledge of elements of grace and courtesy and opportunity to practice elements of grace and courtesy. All of these helps are useless unless accompanied by the work of the individual. So work is not a help to be given, but a condition of construction of the human personality. No one else can do the work. This work can only be assisted.

❖ *Company of other human beings*

The first help given is the company of other human beings. Without other human beings, the knowledge of what it is to be human and what the process of work is for humans is unavailable. In the progression of life forms presented in the *Time Line of Life*, there is an increasing level of involvement of the adult with the young. Human beings, mammals, protect the developing human being within the body. After birth, mammals suckle their young. The process of suckling keeps the infant close to the human, in full view of what it means to be a human, with the ability to absorb the social life of human beings. The child in the second plane, while showing the characteristic of separating from the family, is still attached to home. In addition, the child of the second plane extends the attachment to human society by engaging in acts of "hero worship." The period of human childhood, approximately 12 years, is long in comparison with many other species. This length of time is necessary for the sufficiency of what it means to be human to be passed on.

❖ *A suitable environment*

If the child is to be given knowledge, then the proper environment must be present so that the knowledge passed on is an integral part of the life of the humans who live there. Experience, not book learning, is what is needed. "Do as I say, not as I do" is not the motto of assistance to human development proposed by Maria Montessori. The environment must be prepared for activity, for practice, for repetition by the child in the process of self-construction. It is clearly important that the environment be as free of obstacles in the way to construction as is possible. An environment free of obstacles is an environment designed with the nature of the human being in mind. There are opportunities to practice human behaviors – to explore, to order, to orient, to communicate, to imagine, to satisfy human urges.

❖ *Knowledge of elements of grace and courtesy*

The third help is knowledge of the elements of grace and courtesy. Living in the company of human beings of a certain culture means that one lives according to the knowledge of how to live within that culture. The adult in the child's environment tells the developing child what is acceptable and what is not. An important element of passing on this knowledge is that the knowledge be passed on consistently. If one eats certain foods with a spoon, then one eats that food with a spoon all the time. If one wears a hat in the sun, one wears a hat all the time. If one wears a seat belt in the car, then one wears a seat belt all the time. If one takes only what one will eat, then one takes only what is to be eaten all the time. Expectations of work are to be enforced consistently as well. It is not helpful if one is to work some days but it is fine not to work on other days. Of course, be mindful that work itself includes a time of reflection and rest. The child of the second plane is also given the knowledge of the grace and courtesy of other cultures so as to develop a generalized social awareness.

❖ *Opportunity to practice elements of grace and courtesy*

Once one has the knowledge, it is important that the knowledge be individually acquired or constructed. This requires work with those elements of grace and courtesy. And this work needs to be repeated for as many times and as often as possible for the knowledge to become part of the constructed self. Good work habits begin from the earliest time that a human child is confronted with the necessity to live in the company of other human beings. *In this process of inculcating autonomous habits of grace and courtesy, the moral human being comes to be.* We are finally at the point of this presentation. While moral admonitions and reasoning about right and wrong may contribute to moral development, the practice of manners and kindly social relations in an orderly environment smoothes the way for a child to experience and come to know what are good social relations, that is, morality.

What are Some Specific Helps During the Second Plane?

It is the work of the adults in the child's life to bring the child to work in a constructive manner. I turn now to a specific discussion of the second plane of development. Some details of how to bring the child to constructive work are explored.

❖ ***Establishment of good work habits.*** Habituated behaviors contribute to the security of the human being. When a person knows what to do and when to do it, the person *can* work at a task. Only when the individual is free from care, fear, anxiety and doubt can the individual go outside the self. Such a secure (Latin *securus*, free from care) individual is able to notice others and positively respond to them as necessary. But for the social human being, habituated behaviors are most constructive when they fit a pattern of harmonious living.

Here is an example. If I have the habit of biting other people I may be secure, but I will not be able to construct my personality because I will constantly be separated from my peers, and I need my peers in order to construct a human personality.

The individual needs the company of others and so must in fact live in harmony by exercising constructive habituated behaviors – good work habits. It is this thought that leads to the conclusion that habituated and constructive work habits are antecedent to the development of the moral individual. Because good work habits contribute to the development of a secure person, such a secure person is able to be obedient to the rules of social harmony, that is to say, choosing the good.

The difficulty comes in defining good work habits. Who decides? At the very least, a good work habit is something which serves one well. As we know, when we feel good about ourselves we are more able to feel good about the other and to empathize with the other. Here is a further consideration. Are there good work habits that we can all agree upon? Can one become habituated to a certain set of good work habits defined by one individual, and then transfer this habituation to another set of good work habits defined by another individual? Are there some guidelines to help us choose the kinds of good work habits that lead to the development of the moral human being? This is important in the culture of a school. Can one set of good work habits be fostered in this classroom and a different set in that classroom?

The answer lies in the nature of the human being in the process of development. Maria Montessori proposed that the developing human being exhibits human characteristics (called tendencies by Mario Montessori) and that these human characteristics are highlighted during certain stages of development. For example, the power of imagination is a human power throughout life. At its simplest, the imagination is a reproductive power. At its most complex, the imagination is able to form novel creations. Montessori proposes that the child in the second plane of development has a sensitivity to this power. The child of the second plane revels in the power of the mind to recall images and to put these images together in ways that make sense. The reasoning power of the human mind is thus developed. What does this have to do with good work habits? Simply this: If the adult chooses to foster work habits that do not take the imagination and developing reasoning power into account, the child cannot and will not respond.

Therefore, a good work habit responsive to the second plane child allows the child to explore with the help of the child's imagination and current state of reasoning power – art, making models, timelines of inventions. A work habit not responsive to the second plane child binds the child to specific exploration chosen by the adult and to a specific product outlined by the adult. As Montessori has reminded us – all work centers chosen by the adult are wrong. What the adult must do is present before the child the natural expectation for the human being – to work.

Maria Montessori proposes that the assistance of the adult be consistent with the human powers and with the heightened sensitivities of the child at a certain stage of development. When this is done, then the human being will not arbitrarily be setting up a list of good work habits but will choose those that conform to the child's nature. In this way, the work habits will be found consistent and compatible with the natural urges of the child. They are thus much more likely to become habituated. This feels right. There is little need to worry that another will choose a set of good work habits so out of line with one's own choice. If the choices come from a response to human nature, then the choices will be compatible, even if they differ in their details.

What are some details of good work habits, consistent with the characteristics of the child of the second plane? They must be congruent with the need of the child to work cooperatively in a group. They must be congruent with the need of the child to develop images of the universe and the connections between objects in the universe. They must be congruent with the need to use the reasoning mind, to decide that if a=b and b=c, then a=c. They must be congruent with the need of the child to develop the intelligence, to acquire the contents of the mind that will allow the child to live with other human beings, even those not present. They must be congruent with the need to create symbols, to read and write within the context of the technological achievements of the child's culture.

❖ ***Necessary assistance.*** With regard to a child in the second plane, one often asked question is this: What is justifiable assistance? It is simplistic to say that one does not interfere with a child who is working. This seems to make sense. But is this what the life of a mature human being is all about? Probably not. Think of the infant crying to be fed. Suppose the mother is concentrating on selecting items for a shopping list. Is it fine for the mother to ignore the crying infant? No, it is not. The infant needs the care of the mother so that the infant absorbs the stability of human response to need. So one may conclude that there *are* times when one is concentrating when one must be interrupted. This awareness is brought to the child during the second plane of development so that this element can be constructed as part of the social personality.

This is why the process of normalization is so important for a child in the first plane. While the child is still in the primarily individual construction stage of development, the adult refrains from offering assistance of any kind to a child who is concentrating. But once the child knows that it is possible to concentrate and put one's whole being into a task, it is not necessary that one continue in this mode for the rest of life. If normalization were the end product of human development, there might be a lot of people frozen in concentration, not responsive to anyone. Such a person is hardly a moral human being.

In the second plane of development, the child, normalized in the first plane, is able to be interrupted for the sake of learning to live with others. This child knows it is possible to return to work and to choose to return to a state of concentration. Interruption does not have the same effect on the child in the second plane as it has on the child in the first plane. For the child in the first plane, this state of concentration comes about without the child's conscious mind acting to bring concentration about. For the child in the second plane, a state of concentration is consciously chosen. This is why good work habits are so important. Individually, they allow the child to choose to concentrate and give the child the means to go back to a concentrated activity. Socially, they allow the child to allow others to concentrate and give the child the means to allow others to work in concentration.

Specifically, justifiable assistance is assistance given to a child in need of the assistance. Planned lessons are justifiable assistance. Offering an encouraging word is justifiable assistance. Providing the child with reasons to work is justifiable assistance. Sowing the seeds of knowledge is justifiable assistance. Insisting on the ambiance of constructive work is justifiable assistance. A child with good work habits can recover after any of these "interruptions."

❖ ***Good work habits lead to the moral human being.*** Good work habits stem from a response to the need to live among peers. There is a need to get the project done. There is a need to accommodate to the varying tempos of people. There is the need to conform to the expectations of the class while attending to individual construction.

The end of working in a constructive manner during the second plane of development is a child who is knowledgeable about the universe, who is able to conform to the expectations set by the adults guiding the process, who is able to question, modify, even change a situation, and who is able to attend to the individual constructive process while keeping in mind the individual constructive processes of others. This is the moral human being. A child now at the brink of adolescence, ready to obey while at the same time keeping sight of the self. A child ready to probe the depths of what is the good, what is the evil. A child secure, stable, knowledgeable, obedient, and happy to take on the challenges that tomorrow brings. The truly moral human being is one who is humble, who recognizes the self as worthy, who strives to better the self, and who is able to sublimate desires in the service of others. ❖

Kay Baker, Ph.D. is an elementary trainer at Washington Montessori Institute and an AMI consultant. She holds both AMI primary and elementary diplomas. Dr. Baker received her B.A. in mathematics from the College of New Rochelle, did graduate work at Catholic University and received her M.A. and Ph.D. in mathematics education from the University of Maryland.

The Grace of Music

Nicole Marchak

When visiting classrooms I have often wondered why I see so little work with the bells being done and so much non-Montessori music activities directed by hired *specialists*. Some classes don't have bells at all! We have such an exquisite, unique and brilliant music program ready to be used. I would like to reexamine music and our music tradition, to try to recapture its meaning, its grace, and to verify its importance.

Music is the art of the Muses, daughters of Zeus in Greek mythology. The word comes from the Greek *musike*, or the Latin *musica*, referring to the muses. The muses, through their art, had the power to banish all grief and sorrow and to provide grace. Music is also the art of expressing human emotion. *Emotion* is an interesting word. It comes from the French word *émouvoir* or *moving, motion*, with the Latin prefix *e* meaning *out, forth* or *away from*. So it seems that the affective aspect of our consciousness, of our human experience, is related to music and always part of us. It is not a matter of expertise in execution but of our nature as human beings.

Music existed long before it was thought of as the gift of the muses; it is one of the oldest arts. It probably evolved from essential rhythms of the natural world: the sound of the wind and water, air and fire. It is reasonable to assume that *homo sapiens* had the ability to make noises through the larynx to warn of danger, frighten an intruder, voice emotion, or for the simple pleasure of being in tune with the sounds of the natural world such as crackling twigs, rustling leaves, babbling brooks, roaring rivers and animal cries.

Sounds evolved into speech with the growth of the human brain and the formation of groups of humans. Mario Montessori said that human kind brought with it a "spiritual nature," making it difficult for humans to live alone.[1] Language had to be created as a life-enhancing feature, and this resulted in another need: music for the communication of the spirit, of emotions beyond words. It had to mirror "the sentiments of men when joys and sorrows overflowed channels of expression offered by language."[2] Mario Montessori added that it had to take a form that would enable the soul "to thrill" with other souls. And this, perhaps more than any other characteristic, reveals the nurturing grace of music. It has become part of the heritage transmitted by all human groups all over the world. Direct identification of a group of human beings can still be achieved today through its music. The legacy was oral before it was written, and the power of the oral tradition, captured through stories and songs, has made a contribution to civilization in all cultures throughout the ages. It has indeed defined groups of people. How would it be possible, for instance, to think of the Cossacks without thinking of their music, to think of Scotland without the bagpipes?

In the early 1900's, Charles Marius Barbeau, a famous North American scholar, folklorist and ethno-musicologist, started a vast collection of traditional song recordings and text, now preserved in the archives of the National Museum in Ottawa. He was particularly preoccupied with recording the traditional lore of the Amerindians. He believed that homeland and folklore are inseparable. After an extensive study of the Tsimshian tribe in British Columbia, he came to believe that their music suggested they had journeyed from Asia, as a tribe, to settle on the West Coast. The significance of the homeland in the process of adaptation described by Maria Montessori includes the music and songs in the environment. Music is ingrained in our childhood adaptation to our people, our time, our land.

Music in our lives

Music is closely woven into our lives; whether in the form of songs or dance, it is always present. Picnics and parades have their music, and ceremonies such as commencements, weddings and funerals have their music. Corporations and special interest groups have their jingles. My parents' generation would not have thought it possible to ring in the New Year without *Auld Lang Syne* sung to the big band music of Guy Lombardo and his Royal Canadians. Music is so much in harmony with our humanity that each era has its characteristic musical signature: the troubadours of the Middle Ages, the classicism of the Renaissance, the Romanticism of the 19th century, honky-tonk of the roaring twenties, rock and roll in the fifties and sixties, New Age music… it is always there, part of human tradition. It is present in diverse and fascinating ways. For instance, in cowboy country it is said that during those long, dusty, grueling cattle drives the cowboys take two-hour shifts at night to serenade the cattle. This keeps the herd calm and comforted and prevents stampedes.

In early colonial times in New France, after the disastrous winter of 1605, Samuel de Champlain and his compatriots resettled at the fortress of Port-Royal. To boost everybody's spirit, Champlain founded the *Order of Good Cheers*, a society loosely modeled on a European Order of Chivalry. Members in turn had to provide a feast of the best available food, and to offer it with grace and ceremony. Music and songs were always part of that tradition.

During the 1998 World Cup of Soccer, at the Croatia/France game, the national anthem of France was being played. The camera glided along the row of players on the French team. When the singing reached the uplifting section that practically screams *aux armes, citoyens!* the face of the one player in focus lifted up. He roared the phrase, totally off key, but with obvious visions of that soccer ball triumphantly barreling into the goal of the opposition. His team won the game.

Recently, on a beautiful summer day, the members of the Boyaba Ensemble of Burnika Faso in West Africa were dancing barefoot on the grass in Victoria Park, in London, Ontario. Several families with young children had stopped to watch. Most of the children were dancing to the music. Their arms, their heads, their feet, their whole bodies were moving graciously to the rhythm. At the opposite end of the park, loudspeakers were blaring contemporary rock music, more metallic noise than music to my ears. There were children there too, but they were jumping up and down in disarray, and that was the extent of their response to the music. Later again, I observed young children moving graciously to a rich, melodious folk song from the Caribbean. In contrast, when the music was changed to a crashing type of rock the children became agitated and started to jump up and down rather aimlessly. I suppose this is all you can do with music that clangs rather than flows.[3]

Music and the brain

Music touches the mind through the senses; the classical patterns of Mozart and Chopin feast the eyes, the ears, and delight the brain. Current brain research reveals that audition of classical music such as Mozart's piano sonatas may increase spatial intelligence or the ability to form accurate mental images of physical objects.[4] It is interesting to note that atonal music does not produce such results.

It is well known that the music of Chopin and of Mozart are beneficial to the brain because of the form and structure of the sounds, because of the pattern of the melodies, this shimmering mass of complexities, ordered and logically related; this is all perfectly suited to our mathematical mind. The mathematical disposition of the human mind renders the human person inclined towards a happy relationship with music; music, after all, is simply sound arranged into pleasing or interesting patterns.[5] It is quite possible, for instance, to make a computer-generated diagram of an étude by Chopin and to be mesmerized by the abstract visual pattern coming from some of the most beautiful and lyrical pieces for piano ever composed.[6]

Douglas Hofstadter, a mathematician, grew up in a home where the music of Chopin was particularly enjoyed and repeatedly played on a record player. As a result, Chopin's works became very familiar to him as a child, when the absorbent mind is at work. Later, when he was learning to play the piano, he wanted very much to be able to play Chopin's études, the music that had become part of him. He was quite shocked at the awesome complexity of the written musical score. Although Hofstadter became a mathematician, he never abandoned his curiosity towards the startling patterns of Chopin's music, both aurally and visually, and went on to establish with diagrams the mathematical concepts to be found in Chopin's music, e.g. "three against two," a simple concept. Play two musical lines simultaneously, one to sound three notes and the other to sound two notes.[7] In execution, the two rhythms are played together, evenly and independently, a task easily mastered by a well patterned brain which will guide the right hand to flow into the left hand at the proper time.

Pythagoras, the Greek philosopher and mathematician, was also interested in musical theories. He liked to demonstrate the musical scale using a set of bells.[8] He suggested that each planet emanated a unique musical note while spinning, and that put together, these notes formed a scale. Were there seven known planets at the time of Pythagoras? This could explain why Western music has seven tones on the scale, the eighth tone being the same first tone at a higher pitch. Pythagoras established a precise mathematical relationship of the notes of the scale to each other. The interval of the fifth (*do* to *sol*) gave the scale its 'dominant' note. Another, smaller interval (*do* to *fa*) was the fourth, known as the 'sub-dominant.' We are still today, 3000 years later, in Western music using the chords of the three most important notes laid down by Pythagoras: tonic (keynote), dominant and sub-dominant.

The brain no doubt recognizes the order of music and gobbles it up with delight, and the experience can evoke deep emotion, great joy or great hope, all based on sense perception. This seems to happen with music that flows out of elegant and predictable patterns. We know that some children Anna Maccheroni worked with could only jump up and down until they had heard a piece of music often enough to recognize it, i.e. to understand its pattern and respond to it in a meaningful manner. With clanging music, jumping up and down is perhaps used to dull the sensorial impression and lower the brain's agitation while it is searching for order. What is the secret of the music of Chopin and Mozart? Is it the grace, the elegance, the mathematical patterns? What interesting issues! On the other hand, New Age music is known for its absence of tone and form. Interesting phenomenon at a time when we seem to offer our brain less and less meaningful sensorial food. Passive brains, bland music, drifting spirits?

Montessori music approach

Dr. Montessori initiated the inclusion of musical experience in the prepared environment, and records of her work and observations first appeared in the 1914 publication of the *Own Handbook*... Based on the belief that the most crucial years in development are in early childhood and that it is a period endowed with special sensitivities towards sensorial experiences and the absorption of language, Montessori anchored the experience in sensorial training and nomenclature. The ear discrimination in listening for sounds and silence became a starting point. The bells in their simplistic beauty were there to isolate the tone of the notes and allow the development of pitch. There were 13 bells that hung from a wooden frame. Montessori had previously experimented with whistles made available by Pizzoli. The bells, however, quickly became widely used by the children of the *Casa dei Bambini*, and underwent several stages of development. For instance, they became attached to a base, as we know them today, rather than hung. Montessori did not want to limit the children to the bells, and she proposed other instruments which became of lesser importance or forgotten, such as the monochord (a single string and a resonating chamber) that allowed various pitches to be produced. She also introduced a miniature keyboard which was silent or resonant if desired, and was aimed at educating the hand to be used with greater precision at a time when children are refining their movements.[9] There was also the series of prisms known as the tone bars, still used today by the elementary child. Montessori often refers to the Swiss music teacher Dalcroze, who included movement activities or eurythmics in his approach. But in North America Montessori education included music before the Dalcroze system. Orff and Kodály presented their method long after Montessori had designed hers.[10] Some have identified in such methods similarities to Montessori's work.

The choice of bells as a medium is a brilliant notion; they can easily be made child-size, they are highly movable, they have a built-in characteristic of isolation, and they were prepared with the aim of training the ear to perceive differences between musical tones, a sensorial aim rather than a musical one. The material was developed to have the characteristics of other materials for the development of the senses: the isolation of one quality only. Being the same in appearance, but producing different sounds, the bells isolate one quality for the auditory sense. The control bells used to vary in dimension while the "working" bells were identical.[11] This is no longer the case. The green boards, the surface upon which the bells rest, is a measure; it sets the order for the position of the bells of the octave of the diatonic or chromatic scale. This objective control of error is also a characteristic of the materials used for the training of the senses.

Early on, Dr. Montessori did not seem to have much patience with individuals who humbly thought that they were not musically talented enough to use the bells. She wrote: "Some individuals commenting on this material, have solemnly protested their native inability to understand music, insisting that music reveals its secrets only to a chosen few. We may point out in reply that, so far, our principal object is simply to distinguish notes so widely different from each other that the different number of vibrations can easily be measured with instruments. It is a question of a material difference which any normal ear can naturally detect without any miraculous aptitude of a musical character."[12]

The pattern of experiences set by Dr. Montessori for the development of the musical senses follows that of language.[13] For children, music is only another form of language. In the same way that they have to be surrounded by spoken language from very early on, children must have music in their lives so that they can absorb the sounds of music as they absorb the sounds of human language. Then, the experience of those sounds in isolation is offered by striking each bell, by itself, and by voice reproduction of the sound. Once the sounds of music have been heard in isolation in the way we play sound games for spoken language, the graphic representation of the sounds are given with the note disks, similar to the presentation of the sandpaper letters follows the sound games, and nomenclature is offered to complete the cognitive loop. Reading is done with the white boards and, in parallel, further sensorial experiences are offered as indirect preparation to the laws of musical expression. There is also singing, the use of the human voice. Always.

Elise Braun Barnett, who met Dr. Montessori in Vienna in 1924 while working at the *Haus der Kinder*, mentions that Dr. Montessori helped her develop the teaching of music along the lines of her principles of education.[14] Barnett also lectured in connection with teacher-training courses given by Dr. Montessori. In 1970, our colleague and contemporary, Dr. Jean Miller, wrote *Music Theory with the Bells in a Montessori Environment*.[15] This work is based on Montessori's books and on lectures given at the International Montessori course in Bergamo and has been used by many Montessori teachers.

In the course of my inquiries for this presentation, I had the privilege of reviewing the music materials available at AMI headquarters in Amsterdam. I was particularly anxious to get as far back as possible in the evolution of Montessori music education. It is obvious that Dr. Montessori herself initiated the program with the creation of the bells, and the emphasis on the sensorial and nomenclature aspects of the experience. We also know that shortly after the First World War, Anna Maria Maccheroni, a Montessori directress, moved to Rome to work closely with Dr. Montessori "on experiments in view of the continuation of the methods used with elementary classes."[16] There, under Dr. Montessori's supervision, she further developed the music program. Being a musician herself, she worked on music education and prepared several publications such as "the six books." Professor Maccheroni's legacy is simply brilliant. Any child in the first plane of development with unimpaired hearing can experience the sensorial and nomenclature phases. Similarly, any child in the second plane can take "the six books" and pursue the experience to a high level of sophistication.

Most of the publications I reviewed were dated, but some were not, as was customary at the time, and it is difficult to establish a reliable chronology of events. For instance, in the Foreword of an undated booklet called *The Montessori Method*, and sub-titled *Music and the Child (with seven charts)*, Professor Maccheroni writes: "These notes, and the six books they explain, are the outcome of experience gained by applying the Montessori Method to the teaching of music to small children. They have been compiled at the request of Dr. Montessori." The six books she refers to are: *First Book, Value of Notes, Major Scales, Minor Scales, Melody* and *Reader*. The printed copies of the six books I saw were dated 1950, with English , Dutch and Italian versions. If by chance you have in your Montessori coffers any samples of the six books in any language, I would love to see them. In 1953 or so, another booklet was put together by Professor Maccheroni and published. The Italian version shows the word *Psicomusica* on the cover page; (the English version does not have this notation). It is subtitled *Orecchio, Voce, Occhio, Mano*. In English, it is entitled:

Developing the Musical Senses and has in sub-title: *The Montessori Approach to Music for the Ear, Voice, Eye, and Hand.* What are the six books about?

The first one, called appropriately *The First Book*, shows the staff, the position of the notes, exercises to play on the bells and to sing. It shows the eight notes of a scale, the diatonic scale, the degrees of the scale, sharp, flat, major clef, minor clef and ledger lines, all illustrated very clearly. Professor Maccheroni wanted the children to write in their own music copy book all that is in the first book, and anything else they would want to add as a result of their experience.

The second book refers to *Value of Notes*. It is a workbook on ear training in relation to value of notes and invites the child to hear the length of a sound and identify whether it is the same length as another sound. This sense can be developed, and movement is used to help train the ear in relation to the length of sounds.

The third book is about *Major Scales*. Through illustrations the intervals, sharps, flats, key signature and other elements are clearly isolated.

The fourth book is about *Minor Scales* and proceeds in the same manner as the previous one, using illustrations as well.

The fifth book is about *Melody*. It offers examples of ear training in relation to the accent of the bar. The purpose is to train the ear practically, not through theory.

The sixth book is a musical *Reader* and suggests several different pieces, each with special characteristics where words replace notes.

The six books are incredibly clear and most of their content is found in the musical education section of the *Advanced Montessori Method*. They offer a control of error for the older children in the pursuit of further training of the musical senses, while making a work book of their own.

The Program

The approach proposed by the Montessori program is developmental and based on observation. We know that children between three and six can hear the notes of the scale. They can pair them and grade them and sing the tones. They intuitively know what a melody is, they can reproduce rhythmic patterns through movement. If a wrong note is played, they recognize it in the same manner as they recognize that words in a familiar story have been changed.

The bells

♫ *Playing the bells in isolation*

In the same manner that we give young children the sounds of language, we give them the tones of the notes of the scale. Notes are sounds, and we are training the ear, not doing music. The bells make it possible to produce and listen to one single note at a time. This, of course, is very developmentally appropriate. Yet we often neglect to recognize this quality in the material. The bells must be in the prepared environment as any other piece of material, not put away in a special room or cupboard, or unpacked in the basement. The child must be free to use them. The first lesson is to show how to hold the hammer and strike the bells. Very young children delight in the activities of striking the bells one at a time and of listening. What pleasure it must be to be able to isolate tones in this way when often, in a child's life, all sounds are connected and a child does not have the opportunity to enjoy one tone at a time. It is the same manner in which it is possible to enjoy the sounds of language, one sound at a time, with the sandpaper letters. Some very young children have been observed taking a bell to a quiet corner of the room, striking it and holding it close to their ear for a very long time.

♫ *Pairing and grading the bells*

Pairing the bells follows the initial listening to the isolated tones of the bells. First the diatonic scale is used, then the chromatic one. Professor Maccheroni suggests beginning the exercise by isolating on a table both bells of two contrasting notes; for example, *do* and *sol*. Start by striking the two *do* notes and sing or hum the tone. Then strike the two *sol* notes, singing in the same fashion. Then, strike the two *do* notes again as before and say that they are the same. This is a simple and powerful way to have the child capture the pitch and focus the child's awareness on the recognition of the similarity of the two bells, while confirming that recognition of similarity is what the exercise is all about. The exercise is pursued independently by the child at the bell cabinet, and repetition is of great interest and benefit to the child. The bells can be graded in a variety of ways and, given freedom and the right preparatory experience, children will discover new and creative ways of grading.

♫ *Nomenclature*

Professor Maccheroni suggests giving the names of the bells when the child can match them. The names are sung, not spoken. A three-period lesson is used, always singing the name of the bell through the first and second periods. When the teacher says, "Give me *do*," she should sing *do*, not say it. Over time, this is repeated for all the bells. A further activity is the labeling of the bells with the disks that show the note names and are put at the base of the bell on the cabinet. Later, this can be introduced as a handwriting exercise when the child is invited to write his own labels for the bells.

♫ *The staff*

Simple and effective materials exist to illustrate the staff. This experience gives the children the opportunity to write music, to position the graphic symbols of music in order to create songs. Children are encouraged to look at their compositions, to play them on the bells and to sing them simply for enjoyment and the richness of the sensorial experience for the ear. This process is described clearly by Anna Maccheroni.[17] The introduction of the clefs and the value of notes with exercises in transposition fascinate the reasoning mind of the older child who has access to the tone bars. As their hand movement becomes more coordinated, children can transfer their composition into a music workbook. What an interesting point of interest for the development of the hand for writing.

♫ *Parallel exercises*

Professor Maccheroni has also given

us a chart of parallel exercises to refine the sensorial training of the musical senses:[18] nomenclature of special terms such as whole step, half step and their position on the scale; nomenclature for the black bells and the intriguing situation when the same bell has two names; the tetrachord and its pattern; the steps of the scale and the names tonic, median and dominant; the major scale and the minor scale with the bells, their language and labels; the introduction of the bass clef, of chords and arpeggios. It is such an enriched sensorial experience! It is all sensorial and language, not music!

Music and movement

We commonly say *to make music*. The statement implies action, thought directed action with a purpose. Music expression through movement must come from within the child, in the same manner that the interpretation of the message in reading analysis comes from within and is not imposed from the outside.

Don't teach children how to move to the music, let the music come to them, clear and meaningful, and they will respond to the melody and express their response through movement. This requires repetition of the same pieces over time. The quality of their previous experience with music will play a role, since a melody is like a sort of total reading experience.

Walking on the line is an excellent exercise in education of movement using music as a facilitator. When the children have oriented themselves to the line and the steps required to walk on it, (it should be a line, not a boulevard) music can be introduced. It is necessary to play the same tune several times without interruption. A piano to achieve this is ideal. Elise Barnett has published a collection of piano pieces suited to various types of movement: marches, runs, gallops, skips, as well as waltzes and other simple dance steps.[19] Martha B. Jones has also recorded piano music for primary and junior classes called *Music Through History*.[20]

To educate the auditory sense for music is so simple! We listen to one bell at a time, pair the bells, name the tones, grade the pitch, use the staff for order, and use the voice to enhance the experience. We give the eye and the ear the beautiful patterns of the white boards for reading and singing. This is done everyday, with children being free to play the bells at any time, to sing, explore, pause and contemplate.

Dr. Montessori also developed the system of tone bars used by the older child. It allows the child to transpose and play any scale, a brilliant piece of apparatus that invites an incredible range of exploration with very little assistance required from the adult. This is clearly explained in the two books, *Major Scales* and *Minor Scales*, by Maccheroni and is beautifully suited to the inquisitive mind and sense of adventure of the elementary child.

The Montessori approach to music is accessible to all. One does not need to be a musical genius. Montessori cautioned the "I-can't-do-music-it-is-too-difficult" martyrs as follows: "All the exercises thus far have been based upon sensory experience as the point of departure. The child's ear has recognised the fundamental sounds and initiated him into real musical education. All the rest, such as the music writing, etc.... *IS NOT MUSIC...*"[21]

How reassuring to verify that our role is not to be brilliant musicians, but to offer presentations for the training of the auditory sense and for language enrichment using nomenclature. No more excuses!

Singing and dancing

It is an excellent exercise for the voice to invite the children to sing the tones of the bells, to express with their voice the song that they have composed with the disks on the green boards. When left alone and not pressured and made to sing for an audience when they are too young to do so, children like to sing. They sing to themselves a lot!

To my great delight, Professor Maccheroni submits that "It is surely the best plan to sing *do, re, mi, fa, sol, la, ti, do*, taking *do* as any tonic or *re* as any sub-tonic, etc."[22] I have always given the cold shoulder to the great controversy of solmization, i.e. the practice of using syllables to denote the tones of a musical scale. I have always recommended giving young children the language *do, re, mi*, and have often been approached by severe music technologists pointing a reproachful finger at my choice. Our work is sensorial in nature, and we are not preparing the children for the entrance exams to the conservatory. It will take the elementary child less than two minutes to switch from *do* to 'C,' and many hours of enjoyment in switching and transposing, using all possible available codes. Indeed, why not change a song from contemporary key/staff notation to medieval script when a little scribble went one way if the song went up, and the other way if the song went down. The controversy is beyond our purpose. Our purpose is to set the best conditions for the child's potential to be fulfilled. *Do, re, mi* is pleasing to the child's ear. Each syllable is a word and not only a letter that sounds like a television 'A B C.' It is a nomenclature that gives each tone an identity of its own in the same manner that each bead bar of the bead stair is given a special colour, making it immediately identifiable to the child. *Do, re, mi* is a richer, more meaningful language to the ear of the young child. The writing form also has greater identity and contrast. The origin of this designation of the musical scales by means of syllables goes back to the 11th century. The syllables are Latin syllables derived from the initial letters of a hymn. What an interesting story to tell the older children as part of our language training program! In my view, this approach is more in harmony with the needs of the young child, and I don't get too rattled over the controversy!

In a classroom, singing should be spontaneous. Sing with the bells, always. However, to ring a bell constantly and without thought for 'clean up time' or 'lunch time' or whatever, is simply another form of piped music, which is not really music because it often involves little emotion. It's just conditioning! Avoid this. It is a mindless activity. I realize that it was suggested by Anna Maccheroni, but I am not sure that she envisaged it in the rote manner I have observed it being done day after day, absentmindedly. I strongly disagree with the practice of using songs to teach children the names of the continents or some other package of information that every child should know. Avoid this. It is rote. It has no emotional content, therefore no meaning for the young child. Singing should not be used as a means to pour information into young children. If we have no other means to make a child aware of the names of his ears or nose or other body parts than this mindless rote, we are a sad society indeed! Sing with small groups of children for the pleasure of singing. Repeat the same songs often over a period of time. Children love to hear a song over and over again. This is how they learn it. "Singing should be a common matter just as speaking is... children sing notes or tunes by themselves, of their own accord, and nobody makes any remarks."[23]

Use folk songs with intelligence. Folk music is written to produce a feeling of security for the listener since it usually relates to the particular quality of a land and the life of its people. Folk songs survive because they deal with everyday happenings which are of great interest to young children; they also have pleasant and lively rhythms, simple but beautiful melodies. Barbara Cass-Beggs put together an exquisite collection of folk songs for Canadian children.[24] Many of the lyrics are in both English and French, as well as Inuktitut and Huron. The language is rich and appealing: loggers, voyageurs, coureurs-de-bois, fishermen, sailors, Louis Riel, the gold rush, les raftsmen, etc. Each song in the collection is introduced with historical background material. What a rich source of stories for our language training program! This experience could lead to the writing and illustration of stories by the older children, as well as the creation of dance steps to accompany the songs. What a source of inspiration for the older child to put together a short story to music! Think of having to describe the adventurous life of the *coureur-de-bois* in their birch bark canoes; think of the logistics of orienteering, preparing and preserving food, camping at night, the black flies! This child-initiated activity must surely be more compelling to the imagination of the older child than an already written play (by adults) put together by specialists (adult choreographer, set designer, lighting expert) and performed for adults at a time suited to adults. I know 5-year-olds who would do this very expertly!

Anna Maccheroni repeats throughout her writings: "Let music be the only teacher!" This applies to dancing as well. Don't tell the young child on the line, "Do as I do." Let him receive the music, experience the sentiment and use movement to express the emotion from within. Children are not marionnettes; they will dance spontaneously. Don't discourage their expression by imposing on them the duty of dancing this way, or "watch me,"etc. Facilitate. Show one interpretation by example, but do not require of the young children that they reproduce your movements like robots. Professor Maccheroni affirmed: "We cannot teach expression."

The children of the second plane of development can better understand the meaning of certain steps or gestures that have been crafted into a folk dance, a minuet or a bourrée. They will be intrigued and feel obliged to follow the pre-set rules for that dance; it's the right thing to do. Children should not be compelled to entertain their classmates, the whole school, the whole parent corps, the whole community. Their spontaneity would suffer, and the pressure of performing rather than enjoying is not nourishing to the spirit; it may turn off music all together.

Auditions

Professor Maccheroni suggests concerts of classical music, everyday, for small groups of children. She reminds us that there are "musical stories" in short but complete pieces, "which give the satisfaction of stories that end well."[25] An étude by Chopin, a song by Mozart or a fugue by Bach could be played. The afternoon children can listen while they draw metal insets or do other quiet work. But this is not background music; it has a beginning and an end and the name of the composer is given. For the older children, Professor Maccheroni suggested that auditions or concerts be arranged for the study of value of notes. It is a more sophisticated form of listening and she concludes by saying, "Art or love must never be oppressed by excessive verbal teaching."[26]

Professor Maccheroni suggests that in the same manner as a class has a book library it should have a music library. It is a classified library with a catalogue to help find any piece of music. It is an interesting project for older children who might choose the format of the catalog and paper, perhaps with calligraphy. What about illumination? The order in this library is similar to reading classification, e.g. "Value of Notes" pieces, "Major Scale" pieces or "Minor Scale" pieces. It can be as sophisticated as the children will make it. The younger children should have access to library music on tapes that they can listen to independently. There should be color coding to associate the piece with the composer, and a picture of the composer should be on display.

The Prepared Environment

Music education as initiated by Maria Montessori and pursued by Maccheroni is brilliant. The most crucial element in its unfolding is the creation, by the Montessori educator, of an environment conducive to the grace of music. The prepared environment must have the bells and the tone-bars from the onset of a program's being offered. The adult voices must be modulated to charm the spirit of the child rather than hurt it. In all aspects of our daily lives with children, we must remain aware of the impact of our voice: the timber, the pitch, the loudness; all aspects can repulse or invite. We must use our voices to sing with the children. Nothing can be more meaningful to a young child than a song sung by a human voice.

There must be freedom to play the bells at anytime following each child's choice and initiative. It has been shown that children progress deeper in their experience if there is freedom with regard to music with the bells. Remind parents of the importance of having music at home, and of singing together, naturally, spontaneously, in everyday life.

Celine Dion, the super-star, is the youngest of a family of 14 children. There was always music at home she says. They sang and played instruments. It was a normal part of the day. As a child, the first song that she performed had lyrics written by her mother and a musical score by her brother. When asked what it felt like to be a star, she is reported to have said: "...show business is not true, the way I grew up is what is true!" I like to think that she meant *real*, music everyday, in our lives, for real!

The prepared environment might accommodate a clock with a pleasing chime. The Westminster chime, for instance, is very melodious and has an intriguing pattern and predictability that would surely interest the children. The prepared environment could have a music box, this excellent suggestion made by Maccheroni. In *Development of the Musical Senses*, she proposes a music box small enough to be held in the child's hand. Children should be free to listen to it for as long as they want, by themselves. The melody of the music box should be of a classical nature and repetitive, which is most pleasing to the young child.

We must make music nomenclature part of our language program at all levels: writing, reading, puzzle words, labels. We must particularly include musical stories in our language training lessons. Musical melodies have stories and composers have stories. This leads to a variety of follow-up work by the full-day child. The elementary child approaches the same issues in a more analytical and research-oriented manner but, nonetheless, it must be an integral part of his experience as well. Music activities are done with small groups of children which allow the grace of music to flow with greater intimacy; never do 'circles'!

There must be enough children in the class to create the dynamic experience that only children can bring about. One of the greatest challenges to the dynamic and brilliant learning that occurs in a community of children is that our present day classes are too small, much too small in numbers. Groups of children in the primary program that are under 30 do not always make possible a balanced age distribution, including a significant number of full-day children. The resulting variety, intensity and vibrancy of the children's inquisitiveness is affected. When she wrote *Childhood Education*, Montessori reported that: "...many nations have changed their educational laws in order NOT TO OBSTRUCT the application of the Montessori method."[27] Are we doing enough to ensure that present day regulations do not obstruct the application of authentic Montessori programs?

Conclusion

Music was created by human beings to complement their spiritual nature; it is food for the senses, therefore, food for the spirit. Its grace is to *thrill* our spirit, celebrate life and allow the expression of emotion, that which stirs within: joy, sorrow, despair, bliss. It is to allow this while engaging the movement of the body and experiencing the beauty of the human voice. Music is important in daily living, in brain development, and is suited to the mathematical mind. In Montessori, our music program is comprehensive, developmentally oriented, and focuses on sensorial refinement and language. The pattern of presentations is similar to other areas of the environment. What is required for Montessori music education is not brilliant musicianship or complete knowledge of music laws, but an enriched experience of the auditory sense and language.

It was not my purpose to have you dancing in the aisles but to refresh the memory on the outstanding music education blueprint left by Maria Montessori. What I have presented here is not my personal invention; it is based on the writings of Montessori, Maccheroni and others who have endorsed the same philosophy of education. The Montessori method is often borrowed. Beware of imitators! Go back to primary sources; our program for the training of the musical senses is brilliantly luminous and eminently applicable.

We have received a unique legacy and as a community we must celebrate it, protect it and not trivialize it. Every time we introduce music training by specialists at the expense of the approach which uses the senses and language, we betray our legacy. Make music a part of the everyday spirit of your life, of your class.

Every Montessori educator is a leader. We have an invigorating responsibility! We, collectively and individually, are the stewards of Maria Montessori's vision. Are we doing enough towards the stewardship of the vision? I will quote from a text written in 1903. It is not from Dr. Montessori but from George Bernard Shaw. I think she would have liked it:

"This is the true joy in life, the being used for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one... the being a force of nature instead of a feverish, selfish little clod of ailments and grievances complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy."[28]

Let's do it. Let's get on with it! I assure you that the grace of music will enrapture you and make you forget the grief and sorrow you might experience by thinking that you have to learn music to be a good Montessori director or directress! It's not music. It is sensorial training of the ear and language. We have received so much; let's celebrate the music legacy of Maria Montessori! ❖

NOTES

[1] Montessori, Mario, *Man's Spiritual Expressions: Language and Music*, reproduced in Communications, 1, 1986.

[2] Ibid., p. 2.

[3] Kotulak, Ronald, *Inside the Brain*, Universal Press, 1996.

[4] Kotulak, Ibid.

[5] World Book Encyclopedia, 1984 ed.

[6] Hofstadter, Douglas, "The Music of Frédéric Chopin: startling aural patterns that also startle the eye." *Scientific American*, April 1982, pp. 16-23.

[7] Ibid., p. 19.

[8] Galway, James, *Music in Time*, New York, H.N. Abrams, Inc., 1982.

[9] Maccheroni, Anna Maria, *Developing the Musical Senses - The Montessori Approach to Music for the Ear, Voice, Eye, and Hand*, translated by Rosina Brienza, Not Dated.

[10] Faulmann, Jo, "Montessori and Music in Early Childhood," *Music Educators Journal*, May 1980.

[11] Montessori, Maria, *The Advanced Montessori Method*, Vol. 2, Kalakshetra Publication, p. 297.

[12] Ibid., p. 298.

[13] Maccheroni, op. cit.

[14] Barnett, Elise Braun, *Montessori & Music Rhythmic Activities for Young Children*, Schocken Books, New York, 1973.

[15] Miller, Dr. Jean, *Music Theory with the Bells in a Montessori Environment*, Nienhuis Montessori USA, 1989.

[16] Montessori, Maria, *The Advanced Montessori Method*, Vol. 2, op. cit.

[17] Maccheroni, A.M., op. cit.

[18] Maccheroni, A.M., op. cit.

[19] Barnett, Elise B., op. cit.

[20] Jones, M. B., *Music Through History*.

[21] Montessori, M., op. cit., p. 307 (my colleague Anne Laws brought this quote to my attention).

[22] Maccheroni, A.M., op. cit., p. 28.

[23] Maccheroni, A.M. op. cit., p. 46.

[24] Cass-Beggs, Barbara, *Canadian Folk Songs for the Young*, Peter Martin Associates, Toronto, 1974.

[25] Maccheroni, A.M., op. cit., p. 7.

[26] Maccheroni, A.M., *Music and the Child*. Not Dated.

[27] Montessori, M., *Childhood Education*, Henry Regnery Company, Chicago, 1949, p.4.

[28] Shaw, George Bernard, epistle dedicatory for *Man and Superman*, London, 1903.

Nicole Marchak is the Director of Training at the Montessori Training Centre of BC in Vancouver, Canada, the co-founder of the Foundation for Montessori Education in Toronto, and the anchor person for AMI school recognition in Canada. She also serves as an AMI external examiner and school consultant. Ms. Marchak received her M.S. from the University of California, and her Regulatory Law Diploma from Seneca College (Toronto).

Taking Your School On-Line

Bruce Marbin

To speak about the worldwide web and e-mail, within the context of *Grace and Courtesy*, at first seemed to me like a daunting assignment. After all, computers have joined television as the bane of our Montessori existence. We have all heard comments like, "The children are outside playing Pocahontas and Batman. How can we stop them?" And now there is, "All the children talk about are computer games like *Escape Velocity* and *Barbie Magic Hair Styler*. They say *Super Munchers* don't have to do any work." And, "How's the pink tower supposed to compete with *Road Runner*? How does the stamp game compare to *American Girls Premier?"* Fortunately, I'm not going to use this time to wrestle computers out of the hands of babes. I'm here to get them into the hands of administrators. Yes, into your hands, gracefully and courteously.

There are many administrative uses for computers. And we all have different levels of interest, skills and education that relate to our usage. I am something of an office-chair sociologist and people-watcher. This sometimes gets me in trouble, but it also keeps me alert for new ways to classify people. I have developed a system with five basic types of administrative computer users. As I describe them, see which category or categories match your self perception.

The Luddites – Once upon a time a computer was donated to their school. It's always been somewhere in the storage shed with the garden tools. It's kept there for fear that if it comes into the building, someone might lose their job.

The Evaders – They've allowed a computer in the building but keep it stationed at a distance. They get the administrative assistant or parent volunteers to do any and every formula and function that involves computing. Evaders believe computers are fine in the hands of others.

The Wordsmiths – These administrators use computers, but for mere word processing only. It's better than writing by hand; eraser crumbs are messy and pens leak. They liked their old typewriter but someone hid it. Perhaps the wordsmiths use an older laptop, one that can be hidden in their briefcase until needed.

The Gadabouts – They have already mastered adventurous things like databases, spreadsheets, publication programs; if they haven't gotten around to HTML and Java script yet, they're ready for them. Windows users have a scanned in photo of Dr. Montessori as 'wall paper' and Mac users have a screen saver with multiple images of dressing frames with wings flying across their screen. Oh yes, the Gadabouts can also be seen trying to figure out how to cheat the computer at solitaire.

The Virtuals – Those who dwell in cyber space on the information superhighway. These administrators are the futuristic types. They conference with board members on-line, browse cyber bulletin boards and websites, and leap virtual search engines in a single bound. Of course, they have fast modems, lots of ram, zip drives, giggles of hard drive... Their office was built around their computer, and it's kept in the middle of their desk as a shrine.

For those of you who have attended management seminars and feel no conference is complete without a personality inventory, you can relax now. Shortly, I'll have you log onto the assessment tool so you can figure your place in the *Computer Personality Star Matrix*. I'm sure your life will be vastly improved once you find out if you are an LEWGV, GWVEL or a WGLEV or a LEG-NWE-VEGE-LEV.

Seriously, I'm hoping most of your schools make use of computers for at least accounting. Perhaps some of you even do the budget, enrollment database, mail merges and staff evaluations. Maybe you even have other functions up and running. So now it's time to look closely and make sure there is grace and courtesy in your on-line practical life.

I consider the computer like a hammer: it can be the right tool for the right job. I know I could pound an object with a rock, but I'm grateful someone thought of fastening a weight to the end of a stick. The hammer fits my hand, the weight is properly distributed, and it allows me to strike with purpose and economic movement. The hammer and the computer are tools for practical life. And yes, where we find practical life we often find people interacting, and there we should also be able to find grace and courtesy.

I need to make one thing clear here – when I talk about computers and grace and courtesy, I don't mean moving the mouse to Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake*, or saying, "Mouse this is Joan, Joan this is mouse" to each new staff member who asks me for an e-mail lesson. I'm talking about how the web and e-mail can be used to extend communication to potential families, current families, staff, other schools, potential teachers and more.

Dr. Montessori said, "An adult works to perfect the environment, but the child works to perfect himself." This working to perfect the environment comes in the fourth plane of development. Raise your hand if you're in the fourth plane with me. Great! We have already done the work of creating our personality and character, our moral code is in place, and we usually communicate in thoughtful, caring and sensitive ways. We use our communication skills in person and while talking on the telephone. Since childhood the rules of how to answer the phone and the correct things to say have been ingrained in us, or at least some of us. I think we all agree that there is telephone etiquette.

Now, with the development of the computer as a tool for direct communication, we have fast and easy ways to reach people and brag about our schools. Along with these new modes of communication come new protocol, new grace and courtesy. Have you heard of *emoticons* and *netiquette* yet? We'll talk more about them later. The grace and courtesy that goes into your website might invite browsers to your school's open house, keep them up-to-date on your weekly events or, in some cases, send them surfing off to the Waldorf school site because you made some web *faux pas*.

Over the years, I've had the pleasure to hear Miss Stephenson lecture and also to read her lectures on the Human Tendencies. In a 1971 *AMI Communications* she said: "Human tendencies of exploration, orientation, order, communication, repetition, exactness, activity, manipulation, work, self-perfection, abstraction, govern the formation of man." She added, "Communication is a function of order and it is this tendency, along with exploration, that leads the child on to further discoveries in the field of language. Language is an expression of the spirit of man – it manifests something of mystery and magic and wonder."

Perhaps this explains why computer usage has spread like wildfire. It allows our expression to be faster and glitzier, and at the same time less expensive than on the telephone, and still travel the globe. Through the tendencies to explore and communicate, we continually strive to perfect new ideas that lead to new forms of expression. Just recently, I read in the *New York Times* about the development of videophones. Do you know the hardware costs between $160 to $700, and you can hook a camera up to your computer? The products produced through technological exploration are constant to our daily lives. We use them for everything from grooming to cooking. Exploration and communication are in the arts and perhaps less obvious in engineering, science and math until a big breakthrough occurs. But keep in mind the tendencies to explore and communicate are in everything from body language to cyberspace.

Let's look at mathematics as a form of communication. I've been studying up on the history of computers. A good book is, *Engines of the Mind – The History of Computers*, by Joel Shurkin. Of course the language of mathematics has played a large part in the development of computers. As early as the 17th century, the German Baron Gottfried Wilhelm von Leibniz used the binary system in a mechanical multiplier. The binary system is the basis of the computers we use today. In the later part of the 19th century, Charles Babbage developed two forms of calculating machines: the *Difference Engine* and the *Analytical Engine*. By developing these machines he altered the language of mathematics. His inventions moved the art of calculating to breakneck speeds.

But in the 20th century, along came Jinos Von Neumann, (pronounced Yonshee fon NOY man), a Hungarian mathematician, who could compute in his head much faster and more accurately than both the difference and the analytical engines. In the 1940's, Von Neumann ran into an accumulating machine called the *Electronic Numerical Integrator and Computer*. Have you ever heard of the ENIAC? This machine could calculate 333 multiplications per second, even faster than he could do in his savant head! Von Neumann didn't rush out and buy mega-vitamins and gingko biloba – he went on to develop the logical controls for a more advanced machine called the *Electronic Discrete Variable Automatic Computer* – EDVAC. How many people use an ENIAC or EDVAC as their home computer? If you do, tell us how many square feet it takes to house the machine. Babbage, Von Neumann and many others helped advance us onto the information superhighway. Perhaps we should add this story to the great lessons.

A final point: stop and think for a minute about how the tendencies to explore and communicate have pushed us to explore other parts of our galaxy in search of life. We enjoy books and movies that show alien life forms with weird heads and no mothers, and usually the way we know they're more advanced is because they've developed faster and more direct forms of communication. Fascinating, isn't it?

The tendency to communicate is a given: how to communicate is the problem. Nod your head discretely if in the last 30 days you had a communication problem. Don't worry, it's natural.

When we communicate gracefully and courteously, we build rapport through caring and empathy. Before I came to the conference, I decided to ask both adults and children about their concept of grace. The children responded with "happiness; niceness; moving slowly and swiftly like swans; being polite and loving and smooth nature." The adults answered with, " I think of the song *Amazing Grace*; fluid ease of movement that is apparently effortless; a sense of peacefulness and confidence; a gift from God – unearned – it's a gift; beauty, caring, conscious movement – an intentional awareness; anything that turns your consciousness towards the Creator – so, it could be something pleasant or awful, but it turns you closer to the Creator." I asked an Italian woman who said, "*Grazia* – it means the same as the word in English. It means prayer, to offer grace – and also fluid movement."

For a meaning of the word courtesy I rushed to my well-worn office copy of the 1978 edition of *The Amy Vanderbilt Complete Book of Etiquette*. Lettitia Baldridge, who wrote the preface said, (referring to Ms. Vanderbilt) "Like hers, my philosophy of manners is that they are based on efficiency, yes, but even more on a superb trait of character called kindness." Further on she said, "…real manners are being thoughtful towards others, being creative in doing nice things for others, or sympathizing with other's problems." She also said, "Having good manners gives one a feeling of security in dealing with people, so that teaching a child manners must still have top priority in family life."

These thoughts remind me of the importance of acting in kind and thoughtful ways. Bad manners and incivility usually result in miscommunication, frustration, confusion and sometimes even anger. When we are acting graciously, we are conscious and in the present. This is when we do our best and create positive opportunities.

This holds true for the worldwide web and e-mail. It's all so new, yet guidelines have already been developed and are available both in books and on the web. I imagine it won't be long before the videophones I mentioned earlier have similar guidelines. Let's look at some of the guidelines in *netiquette*. I've adapted the following from Arlene Rinaldi's, *The Net: User Guidelines and Netiquette*, selecting what's relevant to our group.

User responsibility

- Check e-mail daily because your correspondents have this expectation. They are usually looking for a quick response.
- Never send or keep anything that you would mind seeing on the evening news. Others may read your mail.
- Don't send an unsolicited advertisement. The law allows individuals to sue the sender of such illegal junk mail for $500 per copy. Most states will permit such actions to be filed in Small Claims Court. This is called *spamming* on the Internet.
- Never give your user ID or password to another person. In large schools you may have someone assigned as the system administrator, and there may be multiple e-mail accounts. This person has access to all accounts for maintenance or to correct problems. She will have full privileges to your account for these purposes.
- Keep paragraphs and messages short and to the point. People using electronic communication are like people driving on a freeway. They have no patience and want to get to the matter quickly.
- When quoting another person, edit out whatever isn't directly applicable to your reply. Learn how your software works and don't let your mailing quote the entire body of messages you are replying to when it's not necessary. Take the time to edit any quotations down to the minimum necessary to provide context for your reply.
- Focus on one subject per message and always include a pertinent subject title for the message. This allows users to locate the message quickly; i.e. "Enrollment question: Jones Family" or "Budget Report Update 7/23."
- Include your name at the bottom of e-mail messages. Your signature footer should include your name, position and e-mail address. It should not exceed more than four lines. Optional information could include your address and phone or fax number.
- Capitalize words only to highlight an important point or to distinguish a title or heading. Capitalizing whole words that are not titles is generally termed as SHOUTING!
- *Asterisks* surrounding a word can be used to make a stronger point.
- Use the underscore symbol before and after the title of a book, i.e. _The Wizard of Oz_. There are many different e-mail companies and formatting is often lost between servers. Font size and type, italics, quote marks and the number of characters on a line may all be affected. This happens to me when I work at home and send mail to my office, going from Compuserve to our local provider, Proaxis.
- Limit line length to approximately 65-70 characters.
- Avoid control characters. They won't necessarily translate. i.e. Control Key +'a=á.
- Never send chain letters through the Internet. Sending them can cause the loss of your Internet Access. Most importantly, they will annoy most of your correspondents.
- Because of the international nature of the Internet and the fact that most of the world uses the following format for listing dates, MM DD YY, please be considerate and avoid misinterpretation of dates by listing dates with the spelled out month, i.e. 24 JULY 98 or JULY 24 98. We often use 7/24/98.
- Be professional and careful about what you say about others. E-mail is easily forwarded.
- Cite all quotes, references and sources, and respect copyright and license agreements.
- It is considered extremely rude to forward personal e-mail to mailing lists without the original author's permission.
- Be careful when using sarcasm and humor. Without face-to-face communications your joke may be viewed as criticism. When being humorous, use *emoticons* to express humor. (Tilt your head to the left to see the emoticon smile, :-) = happy face for humor.)
- Acronyms that you know the reader will understand can be used to abbreviate when possible. However, messages that are filled with acronyms can be confusing and annoying to the reader.

Examples:
IMHO = *in my humble/honest opinion*
FYI = *for your information*
BTW = *by the way*
Flame = *antagonistic criticism*

Core rules of netiquette

(excerpted and adapted from the book *Netiquette*, by Virginia Shea)

Rule 1 • Remember the human. This is like the golden rule. Remember, all you have is a computer screen. There are no facial expressions, gestures or tone of voice to communicate meaning.

Rule 2 • Adhere to the same standards of behavior on-line that you follow in real life. This relates to your code of ethics. People seem to think it is okay to do things in cyberspace because there is little chance of getting caught. Sometimes they lower their ethics and do things they would not normally do in real life. This is not acceptable. Example: you like the description of the practical life area on the NAMTA website. It is possible simply to cut and paste the information onto your school's website. You need to contact NAMTA's webmaster for permission before using it on your website.

Rule 3 • Know where you are in cyberspace. What is acceptable in one domain of cyberspace may be unacceptable in others. In chat groups about TV stars, gossip is regular. However, in other types of groups it is not permitted. "Lurk before you leap" refers to checking out a group before participating. Read the archives and get a sense of how the people interact before jumping in with your comments. I'm not aware of any Montessori chat groups, but I know of a list server where Montessorians share information. America On-Line sponsors this group and subscription is free. You can go to the main website for this list server through the URL, www.listserv.aol.com.

Rule 4 • Respect other people's time and bandwidth. The word bandwidth has several technical meanings, but here it refers to time and the information carrying capacity of the wires and channels that connect us in cyberspace. The main idea is to send reasonably sized documents so as not to clog the lines. Also, recognize that you are asking other people to read and respond to your messages. So be respectful of their time. I remember the first time I was an unsuspecting recipient of a very large e-mail, about 30 pages. It took half an hour for it to download. I thought my computer was locked up because nothing was happening on the screen. I finally realized what was going on and reconnected. The entire process took about an hour and could have been avoided had I known to expect it ahead of time.

Rule 5 • Make yourself look good online. In e-mail discussion groups, people can't see you so they get to know you through your writing. Remember writing style. Spelling and grammar do count. Many e-mail programs have spell check. Some e-mail programs have automatic spell check. It may change words to ones that are different than you intended.

Rule 6 • Share expert knowledge. The Internet was founded because scientists wanted to share information. Gradually, the rest of us joined the bandwagon. This rule is a positive. This is a way for us to share what we know about children and schools.

Rule 7 • Help keep flame wars under control. *Flaming* is the word used for expressing strongly held opinions without holding back any emotions. Tact is not its objective. It is a longstanding network tradition. However, there is a taboo against adding fuel to the fire so it gets out of hand. The idea is to curtail angry messages that can dominate a discussion group.

Rule 8 • Respect other people's privacy. This is to remind you that reading other people's mail is a no-no. Several staff members use my computer and the school's address for e-mail. I gave them each an on-line folder so when their mail comes I can file it and let them know without opening it. If they request, sometimes I will print it out.

Rule 9 • Don't abuse your power. This is similar to Rule 8 and refers mainly to system administrators. They have more access and therefore more power. Again, if you are in this position, it is not acceptable to read someone else's mail.

Rule 10 • Be forgiving of other people's mistakes. This guideline should be no stranger to Montessorians. It refers to being friendly with error.

We've discussed some basic guidelines for using e-mail and participating in discussion groups. Earlier, I mentioned emoticons, combined keystrokes that create pictures. Some people use emoticons to supplement and clarify the feeling behind their words. I'm sure most of you have received a handwritten letter with a smiley or frown face for extra emphasis of a feeling. E-mail users do the same thing.

Some examples of emoticons

Smile :-)
Wink ;-)
Boredom :-|
Surprise S-|
Yawn :-o
Wow :-O
Frown :-(
One eyed wink ,-)
Crying ;-(
Laugh :-D
Unhappiness :-c
Tongue tied :-&
Animated laughing :)))))

And here are some funny ones:

Kiss :-*
Asleep |-)
Cow 3:-o
Moustache :-{)
Hug []
Fish <'((((-<
Smoker :-!
Don King ===:-d
Punk rocker =:-)
My lips are sealed :-x
Sticking out tongue :-p
Put your money where your mouth is :-$

Users have both positive and negative views about using *emoticons*. Each person makes his or her own decision whether or not to use them.

Let's focus now on the value of having a web site for your school and the process of creating websites. The biggest advantages are:

- Marketing
- Information sharing
- Long distance enrollment

The web has become a very successful place for marketing your school. It should not yet supplant traditional outreach such as the newspaper, school brochure, community programs and radio or TV spots. However, it does reach consumers in a different way and has a much broader base of information.

Some advantages to the web

- If well designed, it is colorful, very informative and easy to access.
- It is constantly out in the marketplace. Anytime a consumer wants to view it, it's there. They don't have to wait for you to know their address and send the brochure in the mail or happen to hear the ad on the radio or see it in the newspaper.
- It is free or inexpensive to have your Internet company host the site. The cost can be approximately $20 per month.
- It's expansive. When people view your website there are usually links to other websites that can also increase their knowledge about Montessori education. Your site can have as much information and as many photographs as you think will give the best representation of your school. We have been thinking of adding an on-line video tour of our school.

Anyone from anywhere on the planet with access to the web can view your site. We get 'hits' from all over the world. I have recently had personal contact with people in Chile, Mexico, France and Ireland, as well as lots of places in the USA. I think Dr. Montessori would love it!

Having a website shows your school is up-to-date. Many families have home computers and are interested in schools that are modern. They see the value of using computers, and they like it when a school teaches computer literacy.

Perhaps the upper elementary or *erdkinder* students can learn how to keep your site current. A parent with a day job created our site, so you don't need a professional to design the site and get it onto the web.

The web allows you to share your expertise and to learn how other schools do things. You can share and learn about mission statements, structure of the board of directors, all-day Montessori and before and after school care programs, school facilities and summer programs. And you don't have to wait to fly to Chicago for a conference. You can read newsletters and weekly bulletins. You may become curious about something and write and get a fairly rapid response (if the recipient regularly checks e-mail). The web opens opportunities to learn things outside your local area, and if you're the only Montessori school in town, this could be a great help.

Another area of sharing involves the families enrolled in your school. If they lose their weekly bulletin or calendar, they can check the web and find out right away that tomorrow is the school picnic.

Enrolling students long-distance is another advantage. This past school year, two families who hadn't yet gotten their moving vans found us on the web and then enrolled their children. Another family from Puebla, Mexico, found us. They're coming to Corvallis for a sabbatical. Their child currently attends an AMI school and will be with us for four months. Through this contact, I have begun corresponding through e-mail with her school in Mexico about setting up an exchange program for our teachers and students. I am currently corresponding with families in Ireland, France (the father is actually on a ship) and Tennessee. Once a family sends their application via the web, we send them a regular application and brochure through the mail. The process is working very well.

Now let's look at some web sites and their designs. If you are in the process of deciding about creating a website for your school, it is good to become an educated consumer. You may not be the webmaster; you may be hiring a web design company or have a parent volunteering for the job. In any case, your site will serve you best if you're knowledgeable about what already exists in the marketplace, what you like, things that work well and things that work poorly.

Some key things to learn

- How to do a search and the various search engines.
- How to browse a website and its links.
- Hardware and software information so consumers can get the most out of viewing your site.
- Rules and design ideas for creating websites.
- What's out there, the possibilities that exist and how you can take advantage of them.

Website design key points

- The home page.
- Deciding what you want to say, keeping in mind that the audience includes both prospective families and families already enrolled in the school.
- Developing the links – the various aspects of your school.
- Making things easy to read. Font size and color are important.
- Making it accessible to all users.

Guidelines for using *World Wide Web*

- Always keep the consumer in mind. Fancy graphics and photographs take a long time to download. Some users with access to the web are viewing documents using slow speed modems. Our webmaster recently told me that 90% of our site browsers do not have the software capabilities to do anything other then read text and view graphics. Your site can be set up for both simple and more complicated viewing, depending on the viewer's software.
- It is not a requirement to ask permission to link to another's site, though out of respect for the individual and their efforts, a simple e-mail message stating that you have made a link to their site would be appropriate. You can also ask them to link their site to yours.
- When including video or voice files, include next to the description a file size, i.e. 10KB or 2MB, so the user can know how long it will take to download the file.
- Keep naming standards for the Universal Response Locators (URL's) simple and not overly excessive with changes in case. Some users do not realize that sites are case-sensitive, or they receive URL's verbally where case sensitivity is not easy to recognize.
- When in doubt about a URL, try accessing the domain address first, then navigate through the site to locate the specific URL. Most URL's begin with the node address of WWW followed by the site address. Examples:
  http://www.cem.ch
  http://www.ibm.com
  http://www.fau.edu
  http://www.cpsr.org
- Including the actual URL in the document source, preferably after the <Address> tag, will allow users that print out the information to know where to access the information in the future, i.e. URL = http://www.fau.edu/rinaldi/net/web.html
- Keep your site up-to-date. Browsers will not come back to your site if it is not maintained.
- It is helpful to include a date of last revision so users linking to the site can know how up-to-date the information is.
- Infringement of copyright laws on the web violates local, state, national or international laws, and can be subject to litigation by the appropriate law enforcement agencies. Authors of HTML documents will ultimately be responsible for what they allow users worldwide to access.

I hope our time today has provided you with ample reasons to have your school on-line. I know from viewing the NAMTA website that many member schools have sites and the number continues to grow. For those interested in sharing ideas through e-mail my address is cms@proaxis.com. I check my mail daily, so look for a response. ❖

Bruce Marbin is the administrator of the Corvallis Montessori School in Oregon. He received his AMI primary training at Avila College in Kansas City and B.A. from the University of Massachusetts in K-3 teacher certification in administration.

The Role of the Assistant in a Montessori Classroom

Sandra Girlato

Why have I been chosen to speak on the role of the assistant in the Montessori classroom? My past experience has provided me with the perspective necessary to discuss this topic; I have at different moments in my life been in the capacity of assisting another. At times I have been privileged to have an assistant as part of my experience, and I conduct an AMI assistants course in the summer at the Foundation for Montessori Education in Toronto. Furthermore, in our collective work, we are all assistants to the creative energy of the child, in whatever capacity our titles may dictate.

As you know, this conference is dedicated to Mario Montessori and it is entitled *Grace and Courtesy – A Human Responsibility*. It is from this perspective that I wish to approach this talk. I would like to begin with an extract from Maria Montessori's Last Will and Testament which can be found in *Communications* 1998/1: "With regard to my property, I declare that this belongs, both materially and spiritually, to my son: that is, to him belong by right not only the material goods of every kind or sort that I may eventually possess at any time of my life until the end; but to him belongs by right also, everything that may accrue from my social and intellectual works, either because they were inspired by him or because, from the time he was able to act in the world, they were undertaken with his actual and constant ***collaboration***, since he totally dedicated his life to helping me and my work."

I read you this because it will help us to put into perspective the role of the assistant. Dr. Maria Montessori, when she spoke of collaboration, spoke of the immense support which her son Mario provided her with, not only in her life but also in her work. She acknowledges in a number of her books the contribution that Mario made to the furtherance of her ideas and principles. In *The Discovery of the Child*, Dr. Montessori writes "Signor Mario M. Montessori has helped this development (referring to the math materials), interpreting and materializing many calculations up to the extraction of the square root of two, three and even four figures; and the combination of the number-rods has made it possible to introduce the first operations in algebra…" In *What You Should Know About Your Child*, Dr. Montessori refers to the period of sensitivity to language when she writes about Mario, "It was Mario Montessori who was responsible for the suggestion that at this period of sensitivity when children have a voracious appetite for words, it would be more useful to allow them to master words relating to reality than words relating to things of fantasy. Thus the children were given facilities for acquiring scientific terms in direct association with the objects they denoted."

Although Mario was a great educator in his own right, he also acted as Dr. Montessori's guide, soulmate, teacher and student. Her work was made possible in part because he aided her, because he protected her time and her efforts, and because they had a common vision. It is from his life and his work that we take our example, that we take our model of what an assistant is or should be.

An assistant in the Montessori classroom is someone who acts as a helper to the directress or the director. It is someone who supports the work of the pedagogical guide in the prepared environment. An assistant is someone who helps to maintain the equilibrium in the classroom. The relationship between assistant and pedagogical guide is paramount to the success of the classroom. It is crucial to the wholesome and healthy development of the child.

Let us for a moment take some time to reflect on Mario's contributions to Montessori; too many to mention them all, I shall highlight those qualities that characterize best his role as an assistant or collaborator to his mother's work. Dr. Montessori referred to his merits as "great and sublime." Mario Montessori possessed:

- A love of life – a passion for living.
- A respect and profound interest for the natural world, the earth.
- A love of children, not a sappy love but almost a reverence for the potential of each and every child. He called tiny babies the *miracle makers*.
- An intuitive intelligence and an openness of spirit.
- A profound understanding and an enthusiasm and belief in the work of Dr. Montessori.
- A cosmic vision.
- He was a fighter for the child, an ally with the child, a defender of the rights of the child.

Are these qualities that every assistant should have? Yes, in fact they are.

The role of the assistant is often misunderstood and misperceived. Sometimes an assistant is seen as subservient, secondary to the directress or director. This misconception has the potential to bring down not only the relationship between the two adults in the class but also to bring down the class and all of the children in it. This misconception can have ramifications on the quality of not only the moment, but can be far-reaching, effecting the quality of life the child will later experience. Can it be so profound? Without question. Let us look at why.

The classroom is comprised of a tangible environment as well as an intangible environment. What is a *tangible environment*? That part of the environment which is capable of being touched, that which has corporeal existence. That which is concrete in nature. We know the tangible environment to be the classroom itself, the tables and chairs, the shelves and, of course, the Montessori materials: in fact, all that we can see and touch. The directress or director, together with the assistant, needs to set up and maintain this tangible environment. I will discuss the responsibilities of the assistant within the tangible environment in a moment.

What is an *intangible environment*? It would stand to reason that the intangible environment is that which we cannot necessarily see and for certain it is that which we cannot touch. This seemingly "vague" part of the classroom is that which can have the most impact on the whole experience for both adults and children.

Let me try to give more definition to the intangible environment. It is the spiritual quality of the classroom, the affective or emotional clime within the space. It is the harmony or disharmony present from day to day; it is the cohesiveness or lack thereof of the social group, and it is the presence of true grace and courtesy or not. We seem to have come back to where we started – grace and courtesy. We must remember that our premise, as Montessorians, is that children are in a state of grace.

It is the responsibility of both the directress or director and the assistant to create an intangible environment that is harmonious, that supports cohesion within the group, that offers emotional security, that balances the needs of the individual with the needs of the group, that encourages the growth of each child emotionally, spiritually and intellectually and that is resplendent with joy of life and love of learning. It is paramount that the pedagogical guide and the assistant are fully aware of the prepared environment's potential. This awareness should be coupled with the joyful acceptance of their responsibility to it.

Is this possible? Absolutely, and it begins with the relationship between the pedagogical guide and the assistant. These two individuals must endeavour to establish a good relationship between themselves. They must be companions on a voyage together. A privileged voyage to work with the elite, the next citizens of this world, the children. This is important because this relationship will set the tone for the classroom. How the two adults in the classroom interact will be a model for the children to follow. We must consider that outside of the relationship between their primary caregivers, mom and dad or what other arrangement there may be, the adults in the classroom are the ones that the children are going to be spending time with the most. The children will absorb modes of behaviour from all of the relationships that surround them and especially from the relationships that are most constant in their environment. Children from 0 to 6 years of age are in a type of "marination" process and will absorb all that surrounds them.

From the *NAMTA Journal*, Volume 23, Number 2, Spring 1998, page 84, I quote from Mario Montessori: "Between birth and his sixth year, he (the child) shows great attachment to his parents or any other persons in charge of his upbringing, and feels strongly that they are more important, more beautiful, more heroic than anybody else."

So we must ask ourselves some questions about the relationship between the directress or director and the assistant:

- Do they set a good example of a working relationship for the children?
- Do they get along?
- Do they like each other (keeping in mind that true feelings can never be hidden entirely from the child)?
- Do they have mutual respect for one another?
- Do they value each other's work?
- Do they appreciate the contribution that each makes to the classroom?
- Do they communicate?

How can they establish a good relationship?

- The pedagogical guide can take part in the interviewing and hiring of the assistant. At this time the directress/director can reflect on the great opportunity to work with another, to be together with someone who can share in the experience of the classroom.
- The directress or director can become acquainted with the assistant as a person, as a coworker, as a collaborator to the success of the whole.
- They can spend time together. Usually a good time for this is prior to the opening of the school term as they both set up the classroom.
- Directress/director and assistant can set up the classroom together so that it is a "home" to both of them. Setting up the classroom together allows for both to have a vested interest in the prepared environment.
- They can make some materials together, repair materials, shop for materials. The directress or director can help the assistant to begin to have an appreciation for what is meant by the "perfect jug" or the "exact colour of sponge." How long has it taken you to develop the *Montessori eye*? Do not assume that it will be immediate with someone else.
- The pedagogical guide must talk to the assistant about the environment, the materials, freedom and discipline. It would be wonderful if the assistant had taken the AMI assistants' course so that they could be "speaking" the same language but, if this is not possible, the pedagogical guide must help her or him to "understand" the classroom. The Montessori environment is very unique for someone who has never been a part of it.
- The classroom directress/director must find out what wonderful talents the assistant has because we all have things that we do well along with things that we do not do well. They must see how these qualities can be utilized in the environment. The assistant may have a particular talent, ability or skill which would enrich the quality of the daily life of the children: does this person read stories beautifully, with feeling and the "voices" of the characters; does this person have a beautiful singing voice or an unlimited repertoire of finger plays; is this person a natural storyteller, having varied tales both fiction and nonfiction; does this person have a capacity for organizing outdoor games like hopscotch, Red Rover, soccer, etc.; does this person have a keen eye for art of any type and an extensive knowledge of art periods and artists; is this person a natural crafter – having the golden touch with glue and paper, string and yarn, etc.; does this person have a "green thumb" – how about an outdoor garden or some lovely window boxes –

the list is limitless. It is up to the directress/director to find out the special qualities of his or her assistant and how best to use those qualities in the Montessori environment. How can those marvelous qualities, amazing skills or wonderful talents be adapted to the Montessori prepared environment?

- The directress/director must talk to the assistant, talk about the classroom, the first day, the first minute with the children, the plan for the week, the month, till Christmas, for the year. He or she must try to talk before things happen; they must try to foresee and discuss as much as possible before the children arrive.

Understand that communication is crucial to the success of any relationship, and certainly this relationship is no exception. They must set in place time for communication: it could be at the end of each day, or at the end of every other day or over lunch, but it must be at least once a week. They must not allow questions to go unanswered or concerns to go unaddressed. They must not allow things to brew. A communication plan must be in place.

If we reflect on our first example of an assistant, Mario Montessori, we can see that there was always communication between Dr. Maria Montessori and her collaborator. Mario in his writings, whether it be in the transcripts from his lectures or from letters, often mentions "talking to Dr. Montessori" or "discussing with Dr. Montessori." They seemed to have an "uninterrupted dialogue," their discussion revolving around one common goal, one vision. Mario dedicated himself to Dr. Montessori and her work. Marilena Henny Montessori in *Communications* 1998/1 describes her father as "...a man with no real scholastic or academic background *but* with amazing clarity of total understanding of the working of her (Dr. Montessori's) mind." It was his intuitive intelligence and openness of spirit that made possible his ability to remain a constant collaborator – an integral part of her success and of course the success of the Montessori method. It is the quality of this relationship that we must take our example from: two people working together, constant allies, one giving strength to the other, each respecting the talents and abilities of the other, one making possible the work of the other through working well in his own right.

Is it possible for two people to work this closely? Yes, this is not only possible but necessary when we are looking at a relationship that has such a profound and long lasting effect upon the quality of a child's development and life. It is a relationship based on enlightenment – the knowing that the child is the creator and it is the child who provides assistance to humanity by presenting himself as a hope for the future.

What responsibilities should an assistant have with regard to the tangible environment? Here are some examples of responsibilities. This is by no means a complete list, a definitive list or, for that matter, a universal list but a list to act as a guideline. All assistant responsibilities should be agreed upon by the school team – administrator, directress or director and assistant. Here are some responsibilities that could be undertaken by the assistant:

- To assist the directress/director in the preparation and maintenance of the prepared Montessori environment as directed. This can include dusting and cleaning the environment, wetting the sponges in the exercises prior to class starting, filling the jugs for the pouring exercises, emptying the jugs at the end of the day, checking to see that all exercises are complete and intact, checking that the exercises are in the correct order on the shelf, ensuring that all bottles contain the correct amount of liquid (for example, that all polish bottles are full) and any other responsibilities of maintenance as required.
- To keep an inventory of supplies needed and to maintain a proper storage area for all supplies.
- To prepare, with guidance from the director/directress, classroom materials and to repair materials and apparatus as required.
- To oversee the arrival and departure of the children from the classroom or cloakroom area.
- To set up an area for the proper care of children who may need assistance with accidents of a personal nature. To set a standard of basic hygiene.
- To assist with the supervision of children in the playground area.
- To prepare the snack for the day and to assist with the supervision of the lunch period.
- To have knowledge of first aid procedures. To have knowledge of the definition of child abuse and the possible indicators of child abuse. To know the legal responsibilities associated with child abuse.
- To supervise the classroom as directed by the directress/director. To work with individual and small groups of children as directed by the directress/director. Remember, the assistant is not to give any presentations with the materials.
- To attend staff meetings as requested or required. To assist with any projects, programs, school trips or planning as assigned by the administrator.
- To help maintain current and accurate classroom records concerning children.
- To have knowledge of the procedure for fire drills and the location of all exits.
- Very importantly – to model appropriate behaviour.
- To help the directress/director to maintain harmony of the intangible environment by protecting the child's freedom to choose, to be free from interruption and to be free from emotional or physical harm. To help the directress protect the confidentiality of each child in the classroom by not discussing the child with anyone (including the parent) other than the directress/director.
- All responsibilities should be purposeful so that the individual can find meaning in what he or she does. Remember, purposeful work helps all of us to be normalized.

The assistant is an integral part of the prepared environment and thus can aid the child's wholesome development. It is important that the assistant know and understand the responsibilities that are assigned to him or her. Open communication is important to the success of any relationship. The relationship that is in place between the pedagogical guide and the assistant will have an effect on the children in their care. With our world in a state of chaos, it is important that directress/director and assistant set an example of harmony and that they are united in their efforts to provide an environment that is choice with respect to all its elements, including human interaction.

The role of the assistant is also defined by what he or she does not do. The assistant should not do any presentations with the Montessori materials. That responsibility belongs solely to the classroom directress or director; he or she is trained for that work. The assistant should not be discussing the child's development with the parents, and 'child's development' means physical and emotional as well as intellectual development. The child's progress is based on a holistic approach, and it is the directress or director's task to report to the parents. The assistant should not be responsible for "discipline," for freedom and discipline are intrinsic parts of the whole Montessori philosophy of education. Freedom and discipline must be understood as something separate from encouraging good behaviour and stopping bad behaviour; they should be regarded as part and parcel of a complete development. It is the responsibility of every directress/director to understand freedom and discipline and their subtle relationship. This does not mean that an assistant should ignore a child who is about to do harm to another, for this is a question of safety and needs immediate attention. The directress/director must help the assistant to know when to intervene and must know how to help the assistant avoid creating an adult dependence in the child. The best advice to give an assistant is probably, "When in doubt, stay out."

The assistant makes possible the work of the director/directress. The assistant protects the "presentation" time. She facilitates classroom management by being an example of appropriate behaviour at all times, by being gracious and courteous in her conduct, by addressing the children in the classroom with respect, by demonstrating beautiful movement and by using choice, exquisite and appropriate language at all times. It is our responsibility as directresses and directors to help the assistant to know the expectations of the classroom. The directress or director must present preliminary exercises on language and movement to the assistant, not so the assistant can show the child but so that the assistant will know the how-to's of the prepared environment. Simple things like how to walk in the environment, how to carry a chair, a table, a mat, how to greet the children, how to approach the children during classroom time, etc. If modeling beautiful language and exquisite movement are crucial aspects of the role of the assistant, the classroom directress or director must make every effort to take the time to show the assistant what is appropriate in the environment. The pedagogical guide may not be able to condense his or her knowledge into a mini-course for the assistant, but certainly taking some time before the children arrive will facilitate the success of the whole classroom. Do not leave too much to self-correction; in other words, do not wait for things to happen and expect mistakes to work themselves out. Try to anticipate events and guide the assistant to a mode of conduct that is acceptable. Remember, diplomacy is everything.

The assistant will always be in the process of personal development, never settling for anything less for herself. Working with young children doesn't mean that our learning needs to stop. The assistant should seek out opportunities to further her education. Certainly learning about Montessori would enable her to understand better the context in which she is working. Reading Dr. Montessori's books and attending lectures or workshops for professional development would allow the individual to have a fuller experience with the children. The directress/director could help in this by suggesting which books to read and certainly help with pointing out the chapters that would be most relevant for the moment. Two possibilities: the passages in *The Secret of Childhood* in which Dr. Montessori discusses the "tyrannical adult," and the chapter on the young teacher in *The Absorbent Mind*.

The assistant will strive to develop her powers of scientific observation. This will allow her to begin to "see" the children and to shed prejudices or misconceptions that she may carry. We all need to do this. As the ability to observe scientifically is pivotal to the success of any classroom, and yet is one of the most elusive of talents, we must help the assistant to develop this ability. Could we as directresses and directors model scientific observation? – to observe without showing that we are actually looking at a child or a situation, to keep detailed records of our observations which are documented with objective language, to avoid reaching conclusions, to be vigilant about protecting the children's privacy, thus not discussing our observations with people not directly involved with the child. The directress/director must help the assistant to clear the mind of any preconceived notions about children and to be "quiet" in the mind when looking at children. Sometimes the best example of a peaceful, intense, fully concentrated observer is given to us by the child. During communication time with the directress/director the assistant could contribute what she has seen with regard to individual children or the classroom.

The assistant will be constantly in the process of helping the children to be independent through avoiding giving unnecessary help, and thus not becoming a hindrance to development. Mario, together with Dr. Montessori, realized that interdependence and independence were parts of our society that made up a successful equation for cohesive living. The Montessori classroom is a microcosm of the world, a place in which the child experiences what it means to strive for personal development within the context of working with others. It is our role as the adults in the classroom, both as pedagogical guides as well as assistants, to model a relationship based on trust, understanding, honesty, respect, service, joy and grace and courtesy. We cannot have any other expectations of ourselves and assistants if we do not have the expectation to work in harmony with the other adult in the prepared environment. Thus we can provide the most conducive environment for the development of the children in our care, not only with respect to a tangible environment, but also with respect to an intangible environment. We must release ourselves to greater possibilities. The purpose of our creation is far greater than our imagination will allow us to know.

Mario has left us a legacy to follow. He taught us through his words and writings, but most importantly through his actions, what "education as an aid to life" truly means. To follow the child. We must always keep this in mind: that Montessori is not a teaching method but a help to the unfolding of life, a help to life during the child's development. Mario demonstrated the ability to serve humanity by working closely with Dr. Montessori and eventually taking over her work after her death. Let me leave you with a quote from Mario, taken from the *NAMTA Journal*, Volume 23, Number 2, Spring 1998, page 78: "This world, with its rapid evolution, outdistances the grown-up, who cannot keep pace with it, who seems to live always in the past. But the child keeps level easily, as though this were his mission in life, the work to which he is born and for which childhood is made. The adult, then, observing this child, sees himself renewed, and draws from him hope, courage, inspiration, and faith. No longer the ruthless dominator, obliged (as we used to say) 'to be cruel to be kind,' his mission is more one of service, of bringing to a master builder the materials he will need for his creative work – in this case, the building of himself. It is the child who makes the future generation. We can only assist." ❖

Sandra Girlato holds a B.S. in psychology, English and fine art history from the University of Toronto, Canada. She is the Director of Training at the Foundation for Montessori Education in Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

Emerging Adolescence: Finding One's Place in the Cosmos

Patricia Schaefer

Our society tends to view a child emerging into adolescence with caution. "Oh no!" parents will say of their eleven year old, "I can see it coming!" It is as if their beautiful child is about to transform into a being less than what it was before. There is an attitude of needed tolerance, patience, as if this period of adolescence is merely to be endured. It is as if they were nurturing and attending a garden when up spring some vibrant weeds that take over and choke out the possibility of the garden's flowering.

"Oh, well, we'll just mulch it, cover it, and the weeds will die out. Just wait a year and we'll try again. Weeding is too much work."

And so the garden waits another year for needed attention, proactive weeding. It may or may not survive.

The emerging adolescent is like that flowering and fruitful garden. First, the proper seeds have to be sown under the right conditions of light, water and protection. With careful weeding and pest control, the seeds take root and eventually grow into beautiful plants, each unique. The weeds in our culture could be those of consumerism choking out the natural growth of our young just when they are about to flower. The task of tending them is hard work but rewarding. That tending is called for through many phases. We will focus on the exact phase of transition from late childhood to early adolescence.

The seeds we will sow are those of what we call cosmic education, rightly chosen for our elementary age children. Properly tended, the plants will take root and begin to bud and flower in the garden of the noble adolescent.

The transition between later elementary years and early adolescence has the signs of any transition. Children are saying good-bye to childhood, experiencing the suspension of an in-between period and welcoming the beginning of their adolescence. They are emerging, some slowly, others quickly, but all show characteristics of the earlier age of being a child and the later age of adolescence. As with all phases of human development, it is well to note what exactly they are letting go of and what they are welcoming.

When we use the perspective of Maria Montessori's sensitive periods and planes of development, a broader context emerges. For central to the child at this age is the call of cosmic education, and central to the adolescent is how that process takes root.

Montessori uses the metaphor of sowing seeds to explain "the how" of cosmic education. It is a time, quite literally, of finding one's place in the cosmos, of seeking it with intelligence, imagination and experience. And the adult's role is to sow seeds, as is the child's, of all truths and possibilities that aid one to live well and serve in the *civitas* of one's homeplace – the here and now which necessarily includes the planet and the universe.

If the seeds are sown in the elementary years, they take root in the place of the adolescent years. The important perspective to keep in mind is that of the place, the ultimate cosmos.

Throughout the early years of the child's life, how to live in one's place is of great concern. The child needs specific lessons in how to be polite and helpful, how to live with grace. In the elementary years, as we have discussed, the child's concerns broaden to how to live and serve in their immediate community, for the social motivation is paramount. They want to help, to be needed, and they will seek out how best to do that.

The seeds of this concern change context as the children perceive their place. At first it was their immediate surroundings of home and school. "How should I act? What can I do? How can I help?" Later, as they travel through their neighborhood they ask the same questions. As citizens of a town, city or state, they need to travel more widely to know their place, but also to study it. So too with their own country. They have a deep interest in its origins, its dreams and how they fit into making the American dream (in our case) come true. So it would be true of the child citizen of any place.

But most importantly, they come to perceive the context of their place as being nothing less than the planet, their cosmos. They ask the same questions, "How should I act? What can I do? How can I help?" It is here they reach the deepest point of consciousness, and it generally occurs in those transition years from childhood to adolescence.

They become passionate, filled with energy and the willingness to serve. The adult now must assist, give guidelines. The adult's primary role is to see that the seeds are sown.

The adult's role as seed sower is a challenging one. It implies the ability to inspire the imagination, to fling out exciting facts that catch, or pictures, charts and timelines that sink into the subconscious, there to provide a foundation, a substructure. But mostly it asks the adult to be able to tell the story, loud and clear, that motivates the students to their highest potential. We must always keep in our minds and hearts the image of the citizens of the universe, the child at home in the miracle of the cosmos. It is that child to whom we speak, that child who will serve.

What does it mean "to serve"? We need a cosmic image to give ourselves and the children. Brian Swimme has given us a superb one in *The Hidden Heart of the Cosmos*, p. 42. He says, "In the cosmology of the new millennium the sun's extravagant bestowal of energy can be regarded as a spectacular manifestation of an underlying impulse pervading the universe. In the star this impulse reveals itself in the ongoing give away of energy. In the human heart, it is felt as the urge to devote one's life to the well being of the larger community."

Bringing a child to this point, allowing a child to come to it by virtue of his/her own interest, imagination and hard work, is the task of the adult.

I suspect that only if the adult herself is there, will it come far easier for the child. But the adult must continually work to keep alive that spirit of service, that sense of being called by something deeper. One must be in the constant pursuit of wisdom, never really sure one has attained it. And in this spirit of humility, one can serve the children as a model.

It is almost laughable to contemplate the experience of early adolescents in our society from the simple vantage point of a midwestern city school whose students are largely middle and upper middle class, living in comfortable homes, shopping in malls, entertaining themselves with favorite videos and TV programs. On the surface they appear happily "consumed" – their time spent and programmed. They are indeed products of a consumer society, acquiring stuff.

What is laughable is the juxtaposition of what we on the staff of the school envision these young people to be, the context in which we see them embedded. It is vastly, literally, different from the consumer adolescent so easily observable. For we are a small Montessori school of 300 children, some thirty of whom are emerging into their adolescence, and some fifty already there.

We adhere as closely as we can to a process Dr. Maria Montessori referred to as cosmic education. This process is the polar opposite of the consumer society these students experience daily. It is as if we are stealthily attempting to sow seeds in them of which they are unaware, while working with passion and tremendous effort to heighten their awareness of who they really are. As Brian Swimme points out, we are working against the genius of the finest minds, the cleverest magicians of the advertising world. We have on our side, however, the wisely thought out observations of a genius – Dr. Maria Montessori. But sadly, that is not enough. Each of us who encounters these early adolescents has to have a touch of genius, moments of sheer inspiration, and the cleverness and art of a successful troubadour to win our charges over. It's exhausting, exhilarating work, and when we succeed, it is rewarding beyond measure. For the seeds take root, and they hold tight and deeply. And wisdom tells us, that despite consumerism's weedy stranglehold, these flowers will blossom and return to the universe their unique and beautiful gifts. For Montessori ultimately is right – naturally within the children is a movement, a creative force to develop themselves into splendid, beautiful human beings in tune with the harmony of the cosmos.

The context in which we see these young people embedded belongs to cosmology in terms of definition. We do not teach these students in the traditional manner. While the context is no less than the entire universe, the cosmos and their unique place in it, the means of gaining awareness of this context is not taught in the usual way, with facts and opinions of science to be learned and regurgitated back. Rather, each of us becomes imbued with the many stories of cosmology, of the radical unfolding of the universe, of a wisdom tradition that draws upon not just science but religion and art and philosophy. The principle aim of this process is not the gathering of facts and theories but the transformation of the human being. To quote Swimme, in *The Hidden Heart of the Cosmos*, p. 31, "While science aims at understanding of the earth's rotational and revolutionary movements around the sun, cosmology aims at embedding the human being in the numinous dynamics of our solar system." The word *numinous* is the key here, for it means filled with a sense of the presence of divinity; holy, mysterious and appealing to the higher emotions or the aesthetic sense. Maria Montessori said that it is clear that nature follows a plan, which is the same for the atom as for the planet. (Maria Montessori, *To Educate the Human Potential*, p. 111) The basic principles of nature's plan are:

- Freedom and independence of organs in their several stages of development.
- Development through specialization of cells.
- Unification of organs by the circulatory system of blood.
- Directive communication established by the nervous system.

"Even in the history of civilization the same basic plan is at work, for humanity, too, is an organic unity that is yet being born. Like organs, the different centers of civilization have been nursed to strength in isolation, then brought into contact by which they merged into larger organizations... Cruelties and exploitations, wars and all forms of violence, have had to play their part because men have not yet realized their common humanity and its work in fulfillment of a cosmic destiny. The embryo can teach us the absurdity of our social mechanism, where one group claims to dominate another merely by authority, without agreement. Nature is the teacher of life – let us follow her ways!" (Maria Montessori, *To Educate the Human Potential*, p. 113)

When Montessori describes the successive levels of education, she says they must correspond to the "successive personalities" of the child. (Maria Montessori, *From Childhood to Adolescence*, p. 3) The methods are oriented to characteristics of these students, not derived from pre-established principles but from observations. The characteristics and needs of the upper elementary child as he/she moves into adolescence dictate the shifts a teacher must make to meet those needs. We will discuss the characteristics and needs of the ending phase of elementary years and the beginning phase of adolescence. But first we must always be mindful that this work is based on a cosmology, and the process is essentially a preparation for life.

The child's sensibilities are social and moral, his/her mind functions powerfully in the growing abstract, and his/her imagination becomes an amazing vehicle for wisdom. "The role of education is to interest the child profoundly in an external activity to which he (she) will give all his (her) potential." (Maria Montessori, *From Childhood to Adoles-*

cence, p. 24) We must free the child to go out of the confines of school to discover real things, real events, real nature. When a child's interest is aroused from a real experience, he/she requires precision, asks for detail. We can in fact "sow the seeds of all the sciences" when the child's interest is activated and his/her imagination is at work. We give impressions and illustrate with details and then it is as if the child, drawn to work, makes a quantum leap asking for the whole, the cosmic reality.

The sowing of seeds of cosmic education in the budding adolescent of late childhood has a frenetic nature to it, for the children are so ready, even demanding, of ways to bring it all together and carry it with them out of the protective garden of elementary years. I have experimented with many suggestions of activities to meet this demand they joyfully put upon me, and I would like to share one that bridges the transition into full adolescence to their great satisfaction.

I show them how to write their cosmic autobiography. This process entails a review of just about every skill employed during their elementary years and requires them to enter with their imaginations all the cosmic stories, the great and the key lessons that fill their memories. They project themselves, unique in all the universe, as present in some way during the *Big Bang*, or the volcanic eruptions, or the primeval sea that first nurtured life, or the marching plants that first held tight to land, or an early coral saving the ocean for us, or an early human savoring the comfort fire gave, or the Greeks who bequeathed the joy of being human, or the Irish monks treasuring, writing and illuminating a passage from the *Book of Wisdom*, or a Hildegard of Bingham praising the greening power of life in song, or a George Washington holding the flame of democracy alive among his shoeless army. Threads weave through time to grandparents' stories, and finally their own stories of their dreams for the future. Here are some quotes I've selected from this year's cosmic autobiographies:

Darcy: "At that time all of space was the same. Well, it wasn't exactly space, it was nothing. That's right, nothing. No time, no space. That's why it all looked the same.

"The reason that this weird place looked different from everywhere else was because there was a tiny speck of light. It seemed to be growing really fast. Little did we know, in that tiny speck was the potential for all space and time."

Comment: There we have scientific accuracy, but the expression simply put of awe.

Darcy: "Right after the *Big Bang* it was total chaos. Everything was spinning this way and that. Particles of all sizes went spinning everywhere. There were gluons, which are a particle that holds quarks together, quarks, which are the building blocks of protons and neutrons, and photons, which are massless particles that transmit light and other radiation. These photons are the most common particles in the universe. These particles were all mixed together and were all fighting against each other.

"This fight went on until the universe was a second old. Then it was all quiet. Antimatter was gone, and only matter was left.

"Then for the next two minutes and fifty nine seconds it was chaos again. Not as bad as before but still pretty bad. All that spinning made me dizzy. At one point I hit another proton and blacked out.

"When I finally came to, I was part of a huge mass. This mass was earth. It was really hot, but cooling off. It stayed this way for two hundred and fifty thousand years. During that period, I had ***a lot*** of time to think."

Comment: Again the detail, the accuracy, but a personification and a use of time and numbers that is potent.

Nora: "Anyway, I was about halfway there (or so I thought), when I discovered that I was completely lost. Not only had I missed the turn for the next universe, I was in the middle of nowhere. Literally. But you couldn't even say I was in the middle because it was nothing, so there was no middle. This may seem confusing to the human mind, but if you saw the thing I'm talking about (which you couldn't because it wasn't anything) you would know what I mean. You probably think that the empty parts of the universe that you live in have absolutely nothing in them, but even those places have the occasional atom that passes through, and dim shafts of light shining in from other galaxies. But the place I had stumbled into makes those so-called empty places seem like New York City."

Comment: This is Nora's voice, her simile. She seems to be coming from another universe tracing her roots – her mother's idea.

Erica: "All of a sudden something called antimatter appeared. A war started: the matter versus the antimatter. I was an electron soldier on the side of the matter. Since I was an electron and electrons are matter, there were many of us in there. We ran out into the battlefield. We didn't have time to think. An antimatter dove at us and we were both annihilated. Even though I died, I knew I had helped my cause. I reappeared when the universe was still only one second old. I was a proton. The temperature was cooler now, but it was still very hot compared to the present. It was 1,600,000,000 degrees and there were seven of us protons to every neutron. Well, my pals Bob the Neutron and Fred the Electron decided we wanted to stick together. So we did, and in doing so, we made the first element of hydrogen."

Comment: There's a cosmic task here, buf, as my husband points out, Erica was on the right side of the battle against antimatter, but if she was annihilated, how could she continue? That's easy – she just "reappeared."

Devon: "I'm now in the ground; it is very hot in the center of the earth, being lava. I'm sitting there bubbling when the earth starts to rumble, and I shoot up in the air and come back down. It is really cool, and I am burning everything I touch. It is much colder outside the volcano, and I cool off and get hard and black. Then it starts to rain, and it rains for a million years. The rains create the oceans, lakes and rivers. The water and wind start slowly grinding me up. After a few years, I am ground into sand at the bottom of the ocean which all the rain had created.

Then I felt all tingly, and I fell asleep. I woke up and I was floating on top of the water, and I was sort of green. I was algae. It was really boring being algae; you just sat there most of the day and waited until you were eaten by a trilobite."

Comment: The inanimate becomes animate. It's possible and a lot less boring.

Nora: "And then it started to ***pour***. It was raining for about a million years (and you think flash floods are bad!) It was really pretty at first, but after a thousand years, it got kind of dreary. All that rain created the oceans and lakes and rivers and streams and ponds and puddles and every kind of water form.

"I suppose it seems kind of shallow of me to have become so annoyed at all the rain, when life was on the verge of creation. Oh well, I guess I am in a shallow mood. If I had known that my journey had just begun! (Wow, imagine that! A couple billion years and I was just getting started.) I would have gotten in a horribly bad mood."

Comment: This is such an adolescent comment. Here we have the entrance of moods.

Conrad: "We played around and came to love each other. We mated and had a baby. He was very small and cute. He was a good boy. We named the baby Stoley. We loved him very much and took good care of him. Hey, I just thought of something. We are the first animals in the history of time that took care of their babies. I was very proud of that. I decided to call myself some name that is cool and sounds smart. I thought up the name Orangutan."

Comment: This is so Conrad. Never mind that in terms of evolution, he must have been speaking on behalf of all mammals. Conrad is new to cosmic education, but he gets the point. As a matter of fact, the task of a cosmic autobiography normalized Conrad. So immersed was he in this task that when the final copy was due, a bad storm blew out the electricity and he couldn't type on the computer, so he, his mother and his father – a busy doctor – hand wrote the 80+ pages by candlelight.

Erica: "I am so lucky to be living and living in such a great place. Studying the Hubbell Telescope though has made me think about how small and insignificant we are in the whole cosmic scheme of things. But there are so many things we need to fix here on earth, our own microcosmos. If we just fix things in our own planet and if we really do our job to help out, that will be enough. Because a bunch of little things will eventually add up to something really big. When I grow up, I want to find out more about global warming so scientists in the future can figure out a cure for it. I also wish to make a computer testing program so they don't test products on animals.

"I hope that in the future the world will still be as beautiful and intriguing as it is today. And I hope my children will appreciate the earth as much as I do."

Comment: This one brings tears every time I read it. It is ***exactly*** the consciousness, the sentiment we are looking for in cosmic education.

These stories are the products of both a thinking process and powerful imaginations. The students have to construct the progression accurately. They discuss and compare notes and enter into the process very seriously. They know that all the elements they have studied, all the areas of history, biology, earth science, chemistry, physics and geography are interrelated. As they write they think. In fact they cannot write without thinking. Writing is, of course, thinking. They frequently use numbers to illustrate points or describe periods. ("A couple of billion years and I was just getting started," says Nora.) Numbers bring order, categorize for them the duration of progression. Numbers are generally accurate and meaningful for them. Their imaginations are revved up, and sometimes they develop quite outlandish plots and subplots.

This year one of my students developed a character called Bob (short for Bobicus), an early human (later to be known as *Homo habilis*). Over most of the year he drew cartoon after cartoon of the journey of Bob, and others in the class got to be familiar with his adventures. Due to demand, Shal reproduced his cartoons and later took orders and charged for editions of the *Tales of Bobicus*. He shows up in a number of cosmic autobiographies. This character was both a creation and an example of an active imagination. But the very ability the students have to place themselves so comfortably at any point in time or space is testimony to the power of their imaginations.

When I introduce the idea of the cosmic autobiography to them, I say, "Tell yourself that if it wasn't for the *Big Bang* and for some mysterious thread of being through time and space you definitely wouldn't be here." Then I add a musing: "And I wonder why each of you are here?"

It is important that we call to their sense of purpose. When over and over we analyze how the workings of nature over time prepared the stage for the next phase, a sense of awe develops in the children. They don't doubt that the same process is in place now – that they are meant to do something to prepare the planet for what comes next. And in this sense of calling, they have hope. They know that much has to be done, that the 3R's of reduce, reuse and recycle are simple givens necessary for the planet's survival. But their understanding does run deeper. Something of their own uniqueness is constantly emphasized. They know they have a mission in sustaining it all, and they feel it deeply.

Central to the process they have experienced is their feet. They have explored the place in which they live, taken charge of forays out into the neighborhood to purchase necessities and get to know neighbors. They have come to know their place, being grounded in geography in a sensorial way. And they are quite simply becoming independent. In this process they are coming to love their place even more because of their independence. Part of their place is a farm we call the Land School, a little over an hour away. They have grown plants in class and planted them in the farm garden. Some have helped sell them. Some have researched bees, and others flowers and seeds which have been a part of the farm experience. All of these trips have been planned by the students, and more than one of them refers to the farm as their favorite place. This going-out beyond the walls of the classroom has satisfied a need they have to explore, to discover, to verify that which is real.

Not long ago there appeared in our local paper an article by an editor saying that his parents had taught him how to act, but that he intended to teach his son how to live. The distinction between these two concepts lies in the degree to which children are allowed to freely choose and plan their own occasions of going out into society and behaving responsibly there. If our expectation is that they will seek out "the rules" of proper behavior and then rehearse and plan their manners accordingly, they will not know only how to act but, more importantly, how to live.

Civil behavior creates civil society – orderly, harmonious living together. What is civil behavior? It is behavior in one's capacity as a citizen, a part of a community. It promotes the orderly good working of a society. It assumes giving back to the community as a given. If children are empowered to ask the questions, they will more easily learn from the answers how to live.

These have been some of the characteristics and needs of late childhood in transition to early adolescence. The seeds sown at this time may or may not take root. As I observe my children move from the cosmic education of their elementary years to the next phase of their development in our junior high as full blown adolescents, I notice something take place in a subtle way. There is almost a turning into themselves, a turning away from the adult, but a very territorial sense of where they belong. That junior high space is theirs and there is no question about it. In adding the farm campus, there is the understanding that the land belongs to them also. They like to have a special place. It is as if they huddle together and sink their roots down. I like to think that cosmic education, whose seeds have been somewhat randomly sown, is now taking root in adolescence.

The adult role as sower of seeds for the elementary child changes significantly in the adolescent phase. While the sower needs to be inspired and inspiring, maintaining a proper environment of light and water, the task remains somewhat random. We never know exactly what will take root. This is not so in the adolescent years. The adult becomes the steward of rooted plants in the garden. Here the task is more defined. The light needed is probably more grounded in psychological wholeness, spiritual inspiration, but the stewards don't have to be the light. They need to be sure of their tasks: providing light, water and preventing weeds. While the steward is neither the light nor the water, there is a suggestion of flexibility and know-how and just plain hard work. The weeding is perhaps the most difficult of the tasks, for the weeds are definitely our consumer culture. Here the adult must hold the adolescents to their vision, remind them of the larger context of the cosmos – their calling. Sometimes they don't want to hear. The entire environment for the adolescent must provide the opportunity for him or her to learn from the mentor/stewards how to be a producer, how to be a consumer steeped in wisdom, grounded. The farm has a way of teaching these lessons, and the mentor/stewards must hold firm to these lessons.

Again I would like to illustrate one activity that seems particularly successful with this age group in our junior high (which is in a long process of becoming an *erdkinder*). My husband Larry conceived of an Odyssey trip from the very beginning of his work with them. I would hand over my 12 year olds to begin their junior high years on an Odyssey. Central to an Odyssey is the anchor of place that you begin with and return to. While you wander on an adventure there is no question of when or where you will return. You leave for three weeks, learn to get along with your group, branch out both west (for the prehistoric roots of the larger place you belong to) and east (for the historic roots of the place you belong to), and return home to know it in a way you didn't know before. It's a journey of the heart in many ways. For most students, they haven't been away from their families for that long, and in order to survive they must bond with one another and their teachers. They form deeply their community in those three weeks. Nightly they discuss how things went that day, feelings and thoughts. They learn to think with and for the group. It is a choice, an exercise of love. They return knowing a reality of who they are in relation to the group. They gain a certain wisdom. Larry refers to it as human heartedness (the Chinese concept).

So while the elementary child thinks, uses the intellect, the adolescent feels, uses the heart. The adolescent begins to fuse the heart and the mind, to think with the heart. They come to know that part of their cosmic task is to make their community work, that their mission starts here, in this place.

The interrelationships of subjects they studied in elementary years are now lived, experienced. The scientific process of hypothesis and experiment with observation is used over and over in human relations as it is in testing the pond water on the land. Biology is lived through their real questions of sex and human development and the planting and keeping alive of the plants on the farm. History and geography are experienced intensely in the west of the U.S. at the Crow Canyon Anasazi dig site in southern Colorado and in the east the following year at Williamsburg, Virginia, one of the central birthing places of representative government in the United States. The Odyssey creates a point of reference, real and alive for each student to launch into their process of knowing themselves and their country in a new way, through building community.

And they can write of this – deeply and clearly. The most appropriate form for them is poetry. They require a poet to work with them, to help them think in the one way that most clearly bespeaks reality – in metaphor. They can write with clear minds connected to the heart.

The numbers they keep alive in their lives are in the study of algebra, but the real numbers of buying and selling are measured and lived again on the farm. There is also a marketplace every other year on how to run businesses. Their exuberance in launching a "marketplace" and making their businesses work is stunning.

While they imagined the cosmos in their elementary years, their cosmic autobiography was an entree to their feeling it in their adolescent years. Here it is that they commit overtly to building community, to acknowledging in this place and time the interrelatedness of things, events and people. The point of origin of the universe is indeed in each of them, in this place (as Brian Swimme points out in *The New Cosmology*, pp. 110-112), and they play it out in a daily drama. Each person *lives* in the center of the universe. To quote: "Every place in the universe is at the center of this exploding reality. From our place on Earth in the midst of the Virgo Supercluster, all of the universe explodes away from us, just as it does from the perspective of anyone in the Perseus Supercluster. We are at the unmoving center of this cosmic expansion, and we have been here at the center from the beginning of time ... *The center of the cosmos is each event in the cosmos.* Science is one of the careful and detailed methods by which the human mind came to grasp the fact of the universe's beginning, but the actual origin and birthplace is not a scientific idea; the actual origin of the universe is where you live your life."

It is here in these years, in this place that they develop their own unique vision. Their hope for the future is hewn more closely, felt more deeply. Some Native American tribes send their adolescent boys out in the wilderness to seek their vision. It is a ritual lost in our culture. On their final bike ride of the year, a five day, 150 mile trek, our adolescents sit by the camp fire on their final night of the two year junior high experience and share their memories, their visions.

And they return to this place, their city home, the farm, the place they've come to know as their own. And they feel it is their place. For we now know that each and every one of us can stand in a favorite place and know that the universe does indeed begin there. And it is in adolescence that we possess a capacity for feeling deeply and creating our vision, our sense of purpose. So the place where that occurs is of course a sacred place, a holy place. They hopefully will return to it to rekindle their memory, their sense of belonging, their mission in the cosmos.

And each place where this occurs takes on a larger, special stage, as a Chinese Box unpacked and reassembled as a tower. The smallest box is here, this place, now. The next, for us at Lake Country School, is the Midwest, Minnesota – its values, its ability to sustain immediate life. The smallest box is placed upon the next larger. The third box, larger still, is the platform for here and now, for Minnesota and the Midwest, and it is America. The place that is America must be known deeply and intimately, for it is their country with the gifts of its mission of freedom, its colorful history of different peoples, its art and literature that tell that story, and its own unique music. The fourth box that becomes a platform is, of course, the planet earth that is their home, and lastly the box of the cosmos that houses all their homes and is ultimately their final home from which they began and into which their lives will return. If we analyze more accurately, it would be good to add more boxes, more stages. Between America and the diverse planet for us would be Western Civilization and before the cosmos the stages of solar system and the Milky Way. But the final stage is always the cosmos.

This is the stage within stages that calls forth the uniqueness of each student. This is the *civitas*. These are inhabitants of the universe called by a special bell tolling only for them, to act with fullest creative powers, in the best interest of all, freely and willingly and responsibly.

Adolescence is indeed a time to treasure what one has learned about the cosmos and one's place in it. It is a time to blossom. It is a time to create a deeply held secret in the crevasses of the heart, of one's unique place in time and space. This is the secret of childhood, not lost in its transition to adolescence, but rooted in the soul and in the soil. ❖

Patricia Schaefer is a seasoned Montessorian holding both the AMI primary and elementary diplomas. She has an M.A. in history from Fordham University and a Bush Foundation Grant for Moral and Social Development of Adolescents. In addition to her 18 years teaching experience, she is the founder of two Montessori schools and an AMI elementary consultant. Ms. Schaefer has served as co-principal of Lake Country School in Minneapolis for twenty years where she currently teaches a 9-12 class.

Graceful Passages: Exploring Culture Through Literature

Joen Bettmann

The Development of Language

The child in the first plane of development is absorbing all aspects of culture. She is encountering all that surrounds her, including the customs and habits, the celebrations and rituals, the way of her people. She experiences this daily, as she is a part of a community. Her language starts to reflect the intonations, the expressions, dialect and idioms, the vocabulary and syntax of her world. The curiosity, the hunger, the thirst for words, for names, for thoughts and ideas, for concepts is continuous. Studies continue to support Dr. Montessori's observations about explosions that occur. The realization that children learn approximately 250 new words per week during this sensitive period is profound. It helps us to be aware of the many ways in which we might express ourselves, using beautiful adjectives, substituting known words for new synonyms, and speaking with excellent complex sentence structures. We have witnessed many times the ability the child has to comprehend when we communicate; this occurs from infancy on. In context, the child can find the meaning of the spoken word. Why then would we expect anything less with reading? One other vital point which at least should be mentioned is the necessity for writing experiences to precede reading, and to continue once the acquisition of reading occurs.

The Meaning of Reading

Dr. Montessori talked about *total reading*, which is reading in its fullest sense. It is much more than decoding, or the mechanical, vocal aspect of sounding out a word. There is a stage that is a prerequisite, where the child must learn to fuse sounds quickly, and realize that the synthesis results in the recognition of a word. In the Montessori environment, we provide the child with enough keys phonetically to be helped in the exploration of language. The child is able to practice in order to reach a level of fluency. It is a short sequence before the child has enough sounds and sight words to open the door to reading in its truest form. If the child has reached an appropriate readiness, Montessori describes (in *The Secret of Childhood*) the importance of not hurrying the children in regard to reading: "...the children came into relationship with books. It began with a really thrilling event. A child came to school full of excitement, hiding in his hand a crumpled piece of paper, and confided to a friend, 'Guess what's in this piece of paper.' 'There's nothing; it's a torn bit of paper.' 'No, there's a story...' A story in it? This at once drew an interested crowd. The child had picked up the paper from a rubbish heap. And he began to read, to read the story. Then at last they grasped the significance of books, and after this, the books went like hot cakes." (p. 153)

It may be helpful to take a moment to look at our society and some statistics related to literacy. (Literacy is defined as the ability to read at a fourth grade level.)

- Reading apathy is apparent by 3rd and 4th grade. According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (which Jim Trelease describes as the report card for the U.S.), 90% of students did not read a book or story recently.
- 44% of adults do not read a book in the course of a year.
- 54% of 7th graders cannot explain the meaning of a passage that is three paragraphs in length.
- 60% of dropouts are functionally illiterate.
- 85% of juvenile offenders have reading difficulties. (On NPR, there was a story recently told by a young man who grew up in an abusive alcoholic home, giving tribute to the magazine *National Geographic* as his escape from an unhappy home, and yet his salvation from a life of crime and incarceration.)
- 60% of the prison population is illiterate.
- 68% of adults in the U.S. report the watching of television as their #1 pleasure, even when measured against friends and vacation.

From an article titled "Reading as an Attitude: A Child's Transformation from Non-reader to Writer" by Rosa E. Warder, there is a passionate statement by this teacher on how little it would take for our society to reach literacy. "Illiteracy has reached frightening proportions in this country. A recent study released by the Department of Education estimates that ninety million Americans over the age of sixteen, almost half that category's total population, are functionally illiterate. When I compare the energy of the first grade author and his classmates with these statistics, I can only guess about the series of spirit-breaking events that resulted in a population of adults without the skills to obtain employment, let alone the ability to fulfill their childhood dreams. I know they will have to develop a serious *attitude* to overcome the obstacle of illiteracy.

"Attitude can be a wonderful thing. In the spirit of my first grade friends, it is a sense of clarity, confidence, and yes, audacity. It is the faith that a dream can become something tangible, and that mistakes are just part of life. It is a way of being full of yourself and loving it, a quality that gives the typical first grader the demeanor of a champion. My first grade friends who aren't reading yet don't say, 'I can't read.' Instead they refer to themselves as 'new readers, beginning readers and pre-readers.'" (*The New Press Guide to Multicultural Resources for Young Readers*, pp. 228-9)

A principle to consider is that what you make a child love and desire is more important than what you make him learn. A sure sign of a reader is the child who snuggles up with a book, although it may be upside down and the words just squiggly blurs; he is showing evidence that he wants to read.

Desire will aid this child in the acquisition of reading skills, much more likely than the child who is pressured to read, painfully sounding out letters, lacking passion or even connection to the book. Compare that which comes from the hothouse, with a forced premature outcome to that which is vine-ripened naturally; the flavor, the taste is totally different.

Total reading includes the understanding of content, nuances, drama, heart and feelings of the writer. The essence of reading is to reach the meaning of each word and how it fits into the context, thus resulting in expression and joy; this is comprehension rather than superficial reading. Dr. Montessori emphasized the spirit of reading, which should be first in our minds as we choose books for the young child. Because the spirit of reading is the focus rather than how to teach reading, our goal is to support the child's interest and desire to read. It is possible for a child to *tackle* a book that is organized with particular sounds, such as the many phonetic reading series that are on the market; but isn't this shortchanging the child on the quality that he deserves? Have you ever had another adult read any of these booklets out loud to you, so that you could just listen to the story line, the construction of the sentences and the vocabulary? Consider the analogy of "fast food for the mind" and whether there is any sustaining nutritional value. It is a good task to help each of us carefully evaluate what we offer to the child. The content is so poor, and the style absent. The *values* are often contrary to our own beliefs (good guy/bad guy, violent, simplistic, unrealistic, to say the least). Often there is no plot or developing story line, just dull stick figures that plod along. The young child is filled with total adoration and love, and yet these books give nothing to the heart, soul or intelligence of the child. The child, so gracious, accepts this as the standard, if this is what is provided, yet this is insulting to the child's intelligence. In *The Discovery of the Child*, Dr. Montessori says, "I gave a book to the child, placed myself next to him, and asked him with the simple seriousness that I would a friend: 'Did you understand what you read?' The child would reply, 'No,' but the expression on his face seemed to ask a reason for my question. In fact, the idea that reading consists in taking in a series of words from which one can draw the complex thought of another was something which the children would later experience and which would be for them a new source of surprise and delight. A book is concerned with the language of thought and now with the mechanics of expression. This is why a book cannot be understood by a child before he has mastered logical language. There can be the same difference between being able to read individual words and knowing the sense of the book as that which exists between being able to pronounce a word and making a speech." (pp. 256-257)

"A child does not read until he receives ideas from the written word... In reading, we are engaged in purely intellectual work... When a child who can write is confronted with a word which he has to read and interpret, he is silent for some time and usually reads the component sounds as slowly as if he were writing them. The sense of the word, on the other hand, is grasped when it is pronounced rapidly and with the necessary intonation. Now, in order to inflect it properly, a child must recognize the word, that is, the idea which it represents. A higher intellectual activity must therefore be brought into play." (pp. 248-249)

One can observe the fascination and the delight. The child is pleased to realize that he understands what is written. It is as though he has discovered a secret message, just for him. The words Montessori uses to describe this phenomenon are *aroused* and *interest enkindled* whereby a deep stirring occurs within the child. This is so much more grand, noble and worthwhile than decoding or *attacking* words. We should settle for nothing short of this, when we actually consider the timing of giving the child books, as a response to the acquisition of reading.

Stages of Pre-Reading; Preparations

In the first stage of reading, wordless books that follow a sequence are intriguing to the young child. A story is told just by following the pictures. Often the child tells the story verbally, slowly turning the pages after carefully studying the illustrations.

Later, we offer singular words that the child already knows from spoken language. It is quite special to see the names of objects in written form. Books with large, simple and clear photographs or illustrations are loved by children. The words describing the actions, the positions, colors, vegetables, professions, etc. are absorbed with ease (see books by authors like Bruce McMillan, John Burningham, Anne and Harlow Rockwell, Helen Oxenbury and Tana Hoban). The child is aided in his reading by the classification, which provides order and predictability. He is more apt to be successful as he sees words related to a particular generic, social or scientific category.

"I was greatly surprised to see that the children, after they had learned how to understand the written cards, refused to take the toys and waste their time in playing and making those friendly gestures to their little companions. Instead, with a kind of insatiable desire they preferred to take out the cards one after the other and read them all. I watched them, trying to fathom the riddle of their minds. After I had thought about this for some time, the thought struck me that through some human instinct children would rather acquire knowledge than be engaged in senseless play, and I reflected on the grandeur of the human mind." (p. 251)

Books that repeat certain words or sentence patterns are loved by children because they learn through the repetition and can follow along. They become similar to the chorus in between stanzas of a particular song (e.g., *Chicken Soup with Rice*, *Make Way for Ducklings* and *If You're Afraid of the Dark, Remember the Night Rainbow*).

The Purposes of Reading

When we think of books to offer children, we may do well to first ask ourselves some questions, forming a personal checklist as we consider the activity of reading.

- Why do you read?
- Do you find yourself in deep concentration, engaged and undistracted, when the contents are of interest?
- Can you read for hours on end, without boredom?
- What occurs when you read? What is the outcome?
- When do you read most?
- Do you consider reading a delightful way to spend vacation time? Do you travel with a book? Do you read before going to sleep at night?
- Where do you like to do your reading? (at the beach? under a tree? in a coffee bar?)
- Does reading relax you? Does it release you from the hassles and pressures of everyday life by allowing you to escape into the lives of others?
- Does it offer opportunities to experience a wide range of emotions from tears to laughter, and from love to hate?
- Do you get excited about the many ways different authors can convey the same idea? Do you appreciate the different ideas that come from the diversity of your reading? Do you find yourself reading a second book by the same author because the first one was so intriguing, appealing, suspenseful, humorous, poetic or profound?
- Do you feel disappointment as you come to the end of a book, wishing it would continue?
- Do you hope to gain insight into your own life through the connections you make or the perspective conveyed by the author?
- Do you have some favorite books that you return to as sources of inspirations, teachings, and understandings of different concepts, pedagogics, or philosophies?

Many people now question the moral development of our society. We worry about the lack of values, the violence, the apathy, the ignorance or lack of knowledge. Books offer three very important purposes in the child's life:

1) Bonding with another human being, through the act by the adult of reading aloud. It can be a very valuable time, aiding the social development of the child, just by spending this time together.
2) Expanding the range of emotional expression, from shaking with fright to shivering with delight.
3) Learning civility, or what it means to do what is right and in the best interest of oneself and others. Another quote selected from *The Read Aloud Handbook*: "Among the things we must teach little human beings if we are to remain civilized are love, justice, courage, and compassion… The long term process of reading literature is one of the best ways to teach them." (p. xx)

When a book is compelling, and one becomes engrossed, one can immediately be transported to a place she will never visit, either because the place does not exist in the same form as once it stood, or it is only a place to imagine, or one does not have the means to travel that far. It is quite a journey that one might take, immediate immersion regardless of miles, through time, across cultural and political boundaries, with no passport necessary other than the ability to read.

Sources of Information

Books are teachers. All kinds of discoveries can be made, as new sources of information are revealed. Facts give new thoughts, new realizations, expanded knowledge. One begins to realize that the more one knows, the more there is to know. Learning is open-ended, unlimited. One could not possibly exhaust all that there is to explore in a lifetime. The enticement of a library begins, and calls to each of us to find out more, to crave further inquiry, to search for deeper understanding, fuller comprehension and wider horizons to encounter, appreciate and investigate.

Pleasure • Appreciation of Style

Well-written text can offer us pleasure. Alliteration, colorful imagery, the rhythm, the flavor and temperature of words can be delightful. One can read for the enjoyment of the expression, as well as the appreciation of the new vocabulary.

Development of Character • Moral Development

Some authors have the ability to bring tears to our eyes as we experience compassion, fear, empathy, joy and other emotions as though we knew the subjects personally, whether they are human or not. "Fiction allows us to enter fully into the lives of other human beings. Characters become more real than people we live with daily, because we're allowed to eavesdrop on their souls. A great novel is a kind of conversion experience. We come away from it changed… wiser, more compassionate, shook to the roots, haunted, humored, hopeful… We are lead to think about ourselves." (*A Sense of Wonder: On Reading and Writing Books for Children*, Katherine Paterson, pp. 68-69)

Story lines include conflicts that are engaging, with struggles that are real. Perseverance, challenge, time, effort and intelligence are necessary attributes for there to be an authentic resolution. The contrast to television is important to mention, because the child is bombarded through that medium with false or deceptive thinking (e.g., all solutions are easy to achieve). Literature, on the other hand, brings us closest to humanity. Bruno Bettelheim says that the finding of this meaning is the greatest need and most difficult achievement for any human being at any age. "Who am I? Why am I here? What can I be?" In *The Uses of Enchantment*, he states that "the two factors most responsible for giving a child the belief that he can make a significant contribution to life are parents/teachers and literature." (*The Read Aloud Handbook*, p. 13)

Critical Analysis and Provocative Thoughts

As we read, we sometimes find ourselves in debate, questioning the authenticity of the text. Do we agree with this? Is this propaganda? Is the author trying to sway us, or convince us, or trick us to believe this? Is there an innuendo, or something implied yet not actually stated, that leads one to interpret in a manner quite controlled or contrived? On National Public Radio, I heard a reporter earlier this month make a statement that 56% of what reporters write in newspapers is considered credible by the public. Doesn't this indicate that there are some who are critiquing what they read, not accepting it at face value, but actually evaluating and thinking carefully about the truth of the message?

Each of the reasons to read should help us to evaluate what enters the *casa* environment. It should help us in our observations, looking for the intimate encounter that is possible when a child makes the choice to read. We can protect the sanctity of this act by ensuring that children are not *required* to read daily, but instead are enticed and enthralled with reading. We can make sure that we are not giving books when the child is still learning sounds and practicing the fusing of those sounds. We should be sure that we have not conveyed the message that books are about competition by using committee-written series that are sequentially numbered. There should not be a special person to whom one reads as an assigned task, but the child must read because he has a spontaneous interest. We might consider ten minutes daily for the older children to choose their own books for sustained silent reading, respecting whatever level at which they are actually reading. It is reported that there is enormous gain when this is built into the day, and the adult also models the same activity. Our observations then should show us concentration, repetition, normalization, consolidation of information, refreshment and joy.

The Reading - Writing Connection

The result of reading excellent literature is improvement in the quality of the child's writing. Her output will show the change in style, the acquisition of new ideas and new vocabulary, and the confidence in communication. This is a sample shared by a directress who read e.e. cummings to her class and then recognized the repetition of style in a child's own creative work. The passage is from *Fairy Tales*:

> "Once upon a time there lived a little girl named I.

She was a very good little girl, wasn't she?

> Yes *indeed*, very good. So one day this little girl named I was walking all by herself in a green green field. And who do you suppose she meets?

A cow, I suppose.

> Yes, that's right. It was a yellow cow. So ever so politely she says to this yellow cow, "How do you do" and what does this cow say?

Does it say "Nicely, thank you very much?"

> Yes. It does. And so this little girl named I is *very glad*, and she invites this cow to come to tea, but this cow doesn't like tea. So then they say "Goodbye" and away goes I through the green green field, all by herself.

Listen to how similar the dialogue is in this six year old child's story:

> "once there lived a girl named valentine. that girl did not have any brothers or sisters. and valentine did wish to have brothers and sisters to play with. one day valentine's mother had a baby! valentine was *very happy*. the baby was a girl, and was named holiday. holiday was very cheerful, *very cheerful indeed*, but of course valentine was very cheerful too."

Characteristics by which books should be selected

- Books should have grace. This means that they should be elegant or that they have beauty of form. The wording should be so beautiful that one appreciates the song that is created. The illustrations should be uncluttered, charming, simple or detailed, yet not busy. Borders should be considered, as in books by Vera Williams or Jerry Pallotta. The condition of the book should also show perfection, with the same standard as the Montessori materials... pristine, undamaged, aesthetically pleasing. Some books have beautiful paper or phenomenal bindings. The size of the book also calls attention, even when it is miniature and petite. The actual type can be different, where letters are decorated or part of the illustration, in themselves quite intriguing.
- Poetry is also eloquent imagery for the child's ear. Words in varied combinations create detailed impressions for the child as a new way to perceive or express already known concepts. Rhymes are fun, and studies show a relationship between rhyming and reading. (In fact, a "red flag" for dyslexia is the inability to rhyme.) Children have a natural affinity for rhythm and rhyme due to how similar they are to the beating of their mothers' hearts. Many books are organized thematically, so that one can find poetry about a specific kind of animal or about plants, about seasons and celebrations, about activities such as fishing or cooking, and so on. Stories can be told about a person in rhyme form. Haiku in its simplicity attracts the child, and often stimulates his or her writing in the same pattern with some of the most profound truths.
- The definition of grace in the *Random House Dictionary of the English Language* (p. 571) includes these words: "a manifestation of favor, or goodwill, esp. by a superior; the influence or spirit of God, operating in man; a virtue or excellence of divine origin; the condition of being in God's favor or one of the elect." The child begins to realize that the author has found a way to convey thoughts and ideas to the reader, has taken the time, the dedicated service to pass on information as his or her social responsibility (later understood as *cosmic task*). As biographies are chosen for the child to read, the selection should include people who have contributed to the well-being of the planet. There are many wonderful people throughout history, from all different geographic origins, who have made the world better because of their inventions and discoveries. When we think of offering keys to the first plane child, we should have representations that help the child enter the pathway to culture.

The leaders and teachers have been people who have developed machines, medicines, music, art, mathematics and so on (see *The Microscope* and *A Little Shubert* by M.B. Goffstein, and *Lives of the Artists*, *Lives of the Musicians*, and *Lives of the Writers* by Kathleen Krull). These inventions have made it possible for us to have a better life, with more harmony, equilibrium, safety, comfort, pleasure, efficiency and good health. The child reads about the brave, intelligent, creative human beings of all ages and all cultures who are his or her heroes. The child is thus offered opportunities to embrace other nations, races and religions without creating a special multicultural curriculum, but just by the richness naturally conveyed as we search for the books that focus on the accomplishments of humankind. The child feels gratitude and appreciation for the grandness of the human spirit, and the inspiration and encouragement to perhaps have a role to play in the future as well. The child who reads literature of this nature is inclined to feel awe and wonder. Rachel Carson, in her book *The Sense of Wonder*, states that each child should be granted "a sense of wonder so indestructible that it would last throughout life, as an unfailing antidote against the boredom and disenchantment of later years, the sterile occupation with things that are artificial, the alienation from the sources of our strength." (*A Sense of Wonder: On Reading and Writing Books for Children*, pp. 30-31) Paterson adds, "Children are born with a wholesome sense of curiosity... but wonder is more than curiosity. It demands an element of awe, a marveling that takes time and wisdom to supply... If I want my children to develop an indestructible sense of wonder, then I must first develop my own... What I desire then, for myself and for my children is a face not estranged but expectant – a sense of wonder on the way to becoming both indestructible and contagious."

- The first plane child is learning about the *real world*. Books therefore should help the child sort out facts about the world of plants and animals, for example. The child needs to understand the characteristics of all mammals, and all birds, and the other vertebrates (and invertebrates) before being able to know the difference and appreciate the fiction of Beatrix Potter, *Charlotte's Web*, and so on. The love of nature, with all of its creatures, is inspired by books that tell of the hard work and the contribution made by each participant. One no longer feels indifferent about an ant or unnerved by a bee after reading Bill Martin's *Little Nature Books*. These stories are life-promoting and instill a sense of wonder and appreciation for the world.

Books also offer solutions to everyday and occasional upsets or worries. Children have the same range of emotions as healthy vulnerable adults, yet lack some of the experiences and, therefore, the understanding that accompanies many life events. Separations of all sorts occur in one's life, from moving to starting school to divorce and even death. A doctor's office, as well as the hospital, are unfamiliar and may cause fear without proper orientations. The birth of a new sibling also means change, which can be unsettling without preparations. Many excellent books are available that share stories similar to the child's own reality, which can help him or her anticipate with more of a sense of security or confidence, rather than trauma or crisis. One must be careful to select those that are not preachy or moralistic, but instead ones that offer perspectives or options for consideration or reflection (see Charlotte Zolotow, Eloise Greenfield, Lucille Clifton, Donald Carrick and Sara Bonnett Stein).

The Role of the Adult

The parent, the directress, the adult that lives in the same environment as the child has an important motto by which he or she lives: "practice what you preach" or "actions speak louder than words." If you love books, it will be evident. You will naturally take time to cherish the precious words bound in a book. You will demonstrate this by showing how reading makes you laugh, gives you answers, stimulates questions and ideas, and offers escape by taking you far away. Your use of books for pleasure and for information makes a statement to the child. As a model, you are demonstrating your respect and appreciation for the written word far beyond the superficial reading of headlines, street signs, labels and ingredients.

The proper care and handling of books also comes from an environment where this is practiced as well as demonstrated. A binding lasts forever if a place is marked within a book using a bookmark (rather than splitting open the book by resting the pages upon a tabletop). The turning of pages by each corner, using the pincer grip, prevents the paper from creasing or tearing. Children watch and absorb what we do, so we must show respect in every action, consistently. Grace and courtesy exercises are lessons shown to children so that they will know the appropriate ways of acting, behaving and treating each other, and items, within their environment. A child should not just be expected to know what to do and how to do it, without an introduction and then practice to perfect. This principle applies to the use of books and should therefore be demonstrated at a neutral time, ideally in anticipation of the child's independent use of books.

Reading out loud should continue throughout one's lifetime. Jim Trelease states, "The best way to raise a reader is to read to that child; it is also the cheapest way to ensure the longevity of a culture." (p. xiv) (An interesting yet astounding statistic, true to American children alone, is that 70% of the population in remedial reading classes are male. In England, Nigeria, India and Germany, there are more females. In Israel and Japan, the numbers are equal. Trelease believes it is because of the absence of the read-aloud experience between fathers and their sons.) There is great pleasure derived from listening to another. Often children experience this with parents and teachers only up to the point that they become readers. Although children may read to themselves, the level of comprehension can be a great deal higher than the actual books the child reads, and so there is an enormous amount of mental imagery initiated from hearing another. When children are not yet reading, in fact, because many have been raised on television, they may have a very difficult time being able to create the visual images from an auditory experience alone. The imagination is underdeveloped, and will wither without exercise. Chapter books and short novels, and eventually full-length novels (over 100 pages) are encouraged, so that a story can continue over extended readings rather than just in one sitting. Memory and recall are involved, as well as anticipation of the unfolding saga in daily encounters with characters and plot. Well-chosen, they will be remembered for a lifetime. A number of famous authors have shared their early recollections of books they experienced in childhood which left impressions upon their psyche. Paterson writes, "And fiction, though it may be true, is not *the* truth any more than a signpost is a place. But it can be a signpost. Fiction is not the Gospel. But it can be a voice crying in the wilderness – and for the writer and the reader who know grace it will not be a cry of despair but a cry of hope – a voice crying in our wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord." (p. 74)

Rotation also rests with the adult. A good library for a child between the ages of three and six is large enough to have books for the *book corner*, and a special area for books of special interest, i.e. cultural pathways. By just having a few of each category at one time, children will explore, return to the same *old friends* to read again, and be acutely aware when new books are brought into the environment. Montessori talks about seducing the child, by captivating his or her interest. This occurs best when we remember that less is more. Variety is the spice of life, but without flooding the environment, making it cumbersome, cluttered and overwhelming. It takes more time for us to retrieve, select, remove and return books, but if we do this every three to six weeks, the environment will reflect what the children have shown as their interests. It will help us to observe and take note of what calls to each child. It is easy to fall prey to the role of *teacher* and thereby dictate the *units of study*, but our goal is to help the child find out more about the world so that he or she can become, belong, contribute, celebrate and embrace life as a gentle, holy, spiritual gardener. Books can help sow the seeds of culture, so that the child can make a graceful passage from a formative state of being to an informed steward. ◆

Bibliography

The Discovery of the Child. Maria Montessori. Fides Publishers, 1967 edition.

The New Press Guide to Multicultural Resources for Young Readers, edited by Daphne Muse. The New Press, New York, 1997.

The New Read Aloud Handbook, Jim Trelease. Penguin Books, 1989.

Random House Dictionary of the English Language, College Edition, 1968.

The Secret of Childhood, Maria Montessori. Orient Longmans, 1963.

A Sense of Wonder: On Reading and Writing Books for Children. Katherine Paterson. Plume/Penguin, 1995.

Joen Bettmann is a primary trainer with the Association Montessori Internationale and the Director of Training at the Ohio Montessori Training Institute. Ms. Bettmann has a B.A. in sociology and psychology and an M.A. in Montessori education.

Community: Valuing People in the Montessori School

Tom Lepoutre-Postlewaite

Margaret Mead once said: "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever does."

In a world which pushes the boundaries through cyberspace and virtual realities, where we think nothing of traveling thousands of miles in a day, our concept of community is constantly being challenged. The majority of clothes we wear today are manufactured or assembled outside of this country. Television, radio, literature, the computer give us access to the world. We have to consider and reconsider cultural traits, norms and values as we are immersed in cultural diversity. We must adapt and enjoin a greater vision of community, affirming that sense that we are a member of a local neighborhood as well as a member of the world community.

As we explore the scope of our work and the richness of diversity, we realize that there are as many communities as there are groups of people. We know of the community of saints, of teachers, of athletes, of laborers, of housewives, of musicians, of Protestants and of Montessorians.

Chambers' Etymological Dictionary defines our word 'community' as having common possession or enjoyment; agreement; a society of people having common rights. It cites the origin from the old French and before that Latin *communitas - communis* meaning common. Common, then, comes from *com* meaning together and *munis* meaning serving, obliging.

Communities are more than an aggregate of an association of people. As the etymology implies, communities serve in common; they are obliged in common. Communities, it may be argued, have more cohesion, more glue if you will, than an association or a society of people. Communities are made up of people who come together for a variety of reasons. Some of this coming together is deliberate, consciously chosen, while some may be accidental or beyond conscious choice. Whichever, the glue that binds them may be a shared vision, values, morals or mission. People in community usually have common goals or similar interests. There exists in them a like-mindedness. Maria Montessori writes: "Society does not depend entirely on organization, but also on cohesion, and of these two the second is basic and serves as foundation for the first. Good laws and a good government cannot hold the mass of men together and make them act in harmony, unless the individuals themselves are orientated toward something that gives them solidarity and make them into a group."[1]

Community holds people together; it gives them a sense of belonging and identity. Familiarity and a sense of interdependence are inherent precepts in this banding. Montessori writes further that "Life in association is a natural fact and belongs, as such to human nature."[2]

Each community will have identifying features that distinguish it from other communities. Some of these features will be obvious to individuals or groups outside the circle; there may be distinct gestures, behaviors, and even more obvious, clothing. There may be celebrations, ceremonies, language, songs, codes, rules and signs that distinguish the group as unique.

Regardless of the individual nature and expression of communities, there are some common values to most all communities. Veronica Williams, author of *Caring Beliefs – Valued People: Beliefs and Values Concerning Relationships*, outlines seven values for effective community: commitment, caring and sharing, loyalty, fairness or a sense of justice, responsibility, opportunity, and balance and harmony. Each group may express and realize these values in unique ways, giving each group its distinctiveness which adds to the great diversity of humanity.

To build a successful community, the members need to commit and agree to a commonly held set of values and adhere to the laws and codes that grow from them. Groups also need the commitment of individuals to the others and to the group.

An important piece of community is the cooperation that links individuals together. This involves not only showing care, concern, and consideration for the well-being and contentedness of others, but also for the weak and the young. Successful functioning of a group occurs when members share work and responsibilities and are able to relate to the lives of others.

Community living defines a need to show loyalty to the others and to the ideals and rules which bind the group together. Loyalty and unity build strength and support which can be helpful to new and less prominent members, and can enable the group to remain cohesive in times when its ideals and values may be challenged.

All communities have to address issues which require decisions to be made about seeing to the basic needs and necessities. How is work distributed, and fiscal health maintained? How are conflicts mediated, individuals with concerns treated? How does the community relate to other community groups? Just communities that are fair in their organization and with their laws are more likely to create successful and nurturing units.

Cohesive social groups nurture a responsibility toward the members, attend to the welfare of individuals and are sentinels for the common good. However, in return, individuals of the community have responsibility for the quality of their own lives and for understanding that others have a right to good quality lives as well. In an organization "...responsibility requires involvement and interest in community affairs rather than the taking of an attitude which ignores problems and is detached from real life situations."[3]

"When men have to accomplish big tasks of civilization, it is not individuals but communities that do so. In order to be able to accomplish their work, communities have to understand each other and in order to coordinate their work, they have to understand those ideas which other individuals or communities have to put forward."[4]

"Fair and just communities offer equal access to resources and equality of opportunity to all."[5]

The health of any community is reflected in the delicate balance held between its values and its actions. The actions should be harmonious with the group's sense of care, responsibility, justice and ethics. If actions do not fit within the group's values, then the community falls out of balance, and the quality of the community's health is disturbed. It is imperative that the community be true to its goals (mission statement), seek to live in harmony and act accordingly.

Community and Montessori

"Civilization demands more work. Social life demands more discipline. Society decreases the bounds of individual freedom. There can be no progress without work. Freedom is necessary. So is discipline. Both are wanted for the advancement of the individual and society."[6]

A community may exist as a physical location to be found in existence and/or be an abstraction of people joined together by ideas, vision and values. What defines the community of Montessori is the commitment to the child and to the values inherent in providing an environment which prepares "...the child for a recognition of his responsibility as a human being towards the environment and human society."[7] The boundaries of the greater Montessori community are universal.

As I perused some of the writings of Maria Montessori, I tried to identify values and concepts implicit as well as explicit to help identify us as a Montessori community, but also to direct us in our actions as schools building environments for our children.

We know that Dr. Montessori was a citizen of the world, advocating for world unity, for the development of society and for world peace through working with the child. For her it was the work with the child that would show humanity the path to social harmony and bring the mind of humanity "...to the level that civilization claims to have reached."[8] There is no greater ideal than to dedicate oneself to the preparation of the environment to receive and be the most nurturing possible to the unfolding of the child: "...the force of cohesion among adults is something that needs to be directed by an attachment to ideals; that is to say, to something higher than a mere organizing mechanism."[9]

Mandates for our Community: A Mission Statement

To move forward successfully with developing a prepared environment for children, we need to develop a mission statement. One need only pick up one of the many books authored by Dr. Montessori to be able to single out a crystal that can become the foundation for a school's mission statement. As guided by those knowledgeable about organizing business for profit and not-for-profit, mission statements are best kept succinct and to the point. Following are some valuable statements taken from Dr. Montessori's work that we can use to guide us in fomulating a mission statement.

"Society which submits the child to education must undertake the responsibility of defending the child."[10] (Our first task is to protect the child from the deviation of society, preparing the best environment we can to his/her development.)

"The Montessori Method is scientific education. Knowledge of childhood is its foundation. It is built on the discovered laws of the development of the body and mind of the child... Education is aid to life. It is protection to life. It is help to life according to its own laws of development."[11]

"...defend the great powers of the child..."[12]

"Education should no longer be mostly imparting of knowledge, but must take a new path, seeking the release of human potentialities."[13]

From the foundation of the mission statement our school community begins to take form. Like the sun in the solar system, the mission statement gives life and direction. Following then, as in the cosmic tales of the elementary, all the goals and objectives of our school fall in line and say, 'I will obey.'

Values for our Community – Goals and Objectives

Following the directives of the mission statement there are some values that can guide us in setting goals and objectives. "Education is a natural process spontaneously carried out by the human individual, and is acquired... by experience upon the environment."[14]

"[A]ccording to the laws of development... the child is obliged to be serious about two fundamental things. The first is the love of activity. It is coupled with the desire to accomplish things... The second fundamental thing is independence."[15]

"The laws of development are there. They have to be observed, ascertained and followed. The child should be given the freedom to develop within the laws of natural development."[16]

"Self-activity is the basis of education."[17]

"The secret of a happy life is congenial work. Work is purposeful activity."[18]

"The emphasis on freedom is for the development of individuality. The emphasis on discipline is for the benefit of the individual and of society."[19]

"The charm of social life is in the number of different types that one meets. Nothing is duller than a Home for the Aged. To segregate by age is one of the cruelest and most inhuman things one can do, and this is equally true for children."[20]

"The only social life that children get in the ordinary schools is during playtime or on excursions. Ours live always in an active community."[21]

Building Community

"When men have to accomplish big tasks of civilization, it is not individuals but communities that do so. In order to be able to accomplish their work, communities have to understand each other and in order to coordinate their work, they have to understand those ideas which other individuals or communities have to put forward."[22]

The joy of being a part of the Montessori community is being surrounded by so much caring and nurturing. Everyone, from teachers, parents, administrative staff, board members, custodians, trainers and more has dedicated him or herself to the child, helping him to accomplish great things for his age. Also, in line with the etymology of community, we are joined together in service "…to society and to mankind consistent with the progress and happiness of the individual."[23] In speaking with colleagues who work at schools where enormous numbers of students pass through their doors each day, I am grateful that I can look at the faces of the students, the staff, the families and be recognized and recognize.

Commitment

Schools need to focus on behaviors and events that build commitment. But before people can commit to anything, they want and deserve to know what the school is about. They may have spoken casually to other people outside the community about Montessori schools, but that will not acquaint them with the mission, goals and objectives that will enrich, and no doubt strengthen, their commitment. New and experienced members need to hear in many different ways from many sources the mission and philosophy of the school. At a recent meeting, the chairperson of our Long Range Planning Committee brought an agenda to the group, and I was pleased to see that he had included a footer that was the mission statement of our school. Now, whenever we meet, there is our mission statement at the foot of the paper reminding us of the reason we are banded together. "People of a positive, cooperative nature with skill, who believe in the fundamental purpose of the organization and its aims, irrespective of status, can have enormous influence in enabling things to happen. Such behavior can be encouraging."[24]

In the first edition of *Northern Reflections*, Patricia and Larry Schaefer write an article about what makes a happy school. The first of the ten ingredients they identify: "a clear and unwavering focus on the educational mission and philosophy of the school."

All work of the school should focus on the mission. Meetings, social gatherings, decisions being made by leaders, teachers, parents, the board of directors, capital campaigns, groundwork, all should be lenses that magnify the purpose for our joining together. We need to communicate the mission, the philosophy and the values of the school, and not just once. We need to get people involved by involving them. To find the passion that Sharon Dubble expresses: "I began to re-envision the Montessori school, not as an education institution to be built and managed but, rather, as a living organism – something to be developed and respected. If our schools are to be whole they must be directed toward the same radical vision that Dr. Montessori saw as the goal of education. Our schools must seek the release of human potential in all aspects of their work."[25]

The people who make up the community: teachers, administrative leaders, board members and parents should be so familiar with the school's vision and values that they could extemporize to others within and without the community. How do we build commitment such as this? By being alert to one another, by caring and sharing, being fair, acting responsibly, making sure that members understand their opportunities to help, by ensuring balance and harmony, and communicating in a myriad of ways.

At the beginning of board meetings, staff meetings and parent meetings, time should be set aside to reflect on some words of Maria Montessori, some aspect of the philosophy, and different people should be asked to prepare the moment of reflection. Hanging a picture of Maria Montessori in the classrooms and the reception area may remind us of the founder of the great pedagogy to which we adhere. Our newsletters should not only have information about upcoming events but a section devoted to pedagogy, and (again) different teachers, staff and parents should be asked to write this article. Staff meetings and retreats should devote time to reviewing some readings, reacquainting ourselves with Dr. Montessori's books.

Keeping the vision alive, and sharing among ourselves the responsibility for doing so, will work to further cement our community of families together in defending the child.

Caring and Sharing

"There are not enough thank you's in the air" is what I tell the students of my class. Then we list together all the people who have contributed to our successful event and each pick someone to whom to write a thank you note. Schools need to show caring and gratitude to all those who contribute. Ceremonies need to be developed and traditions put into place that extend a word of appreciation. Every effort should be put out to create a positive esprit. This should not be false.

In Tim Seldin's monograph, *101 Ways to Build Community in Your School*, he has six major categories:

- Create an atmosphere of warmth and caring;
- Help your community feel a sense of trust and ownership in your school;
- Help your parents feel confident that their kids are getting a first-class education;
- Create an atmosphere of safety, cleanliness and timeless beauty;
- Help new members of your community feel welcome;
- Give each other lots of acknowledgment and a sense of pride.

What an environment in which to grow! Consideration to other's well-being and happiness can only assist in creating a healthy school. Efforts should be made to learn one another's names, and the school should establish some social aspect to the meetings as well as have a social gathering during the year. In team building circles, the professionals address the importance of getting to know who's on your team before you start your work. This act alone helps in the process of addressing the reason the team came together in the first place.

We should care for our teachers, making sure that they have what they need to be able to carry out their work with the children. Uninterrupted time in the classroom, free from the politics and pressures of high maintenance parents, would help them maintain their focus. We should pay them fair and equitable salaries which say we value their work. In reality, all staff should be valued in this manner. Opportunities for staff development and enrichment should be present.

Administrators should be given the reins by the board of directors to run the school. It should be recognized that the leaders are people too, and need to recreate, knowing they will be able to perform their work more humanely if work is seen as recreation too. Too often we expect the administrators of the school to juggle more things in the air than they have hands for. Work together to establish reasonable job descriptions for all the staff and for the board of directors.

Parents and boards of directors should receive their share of kudos and recognition. They are often giving of their time in immense amounts to address needs that may often be impossible to fulfill. Remember, they are there for the same purpose as the rest of the members of the community. Celebrate as a school, and appreciate those who have given of their time and wealth. Include a section in your newsletter where people will be recognized for whatever offering they have made to the school. "When working in an organization, then, it is the people who have to be respected and responded to, to ensure things work... Human resources are the key; all material resources do is set the stage!"[26]

Dr. Montessori was an advocate of serving mankind, and she believed that service to the child is key to addressing the normalization of society. Inherent in the lessons of the elementary child, and in the work of the adolescent, are the questions of identity and role. What part will I play in this great unfolding of the universe? How do I fit within my society and community? What will be my service to mankind?

As a school community it seems essential that we be involved in modeling to our children and adolescents, facilitating the opportunities to serve within and without our school community. This may lead us to explore our neighborhood, contact volunteer services, be attentive to taking a position in society that says we care not only for ourselves but for others as well.

Fairness

Making decisions is a daily phenomenon in all aspects of life and schools are not immune from this phenomenon. Can we build another classroom? The field needs to be repaired; who do we get to do it? Can we accept another child into the primary program? We need to hire another teacher assistant for the lower elementary. There is little attrition and the classroom space in the upper elementary is not large enough to handle all the students. Whatever the situation, we need to be humane and forthright in what we decide. All actions discussed and taken should be congruent with the school's mission, philosophy and long range plans.

Policies and procedures should be clear and pertinent to the running of the school. Decisions, and instruments that are used to make them, should reflect community building and not institution building. We are caring for children and developing an environment for them to build themselves. It seems that the structure of our school should reflect our mission. "Our tendency has been to think organizationally rather than organically about our schools. Organizational thinking too often seeks to manage for efficiency and to structure relationships hierarchically. The emphasis is on building and then maintaining through policies and procedures. Now, I am not suggesting that we eschew policies, procedures or planning. They are vital components, or perhaps more accurately, characteristics of a school. What I am suggesting is that they can only truly characterize our whole school if they emerge from an interactive process."[27]

We must identify processes for making decisions and problem solving that reflect our core values, taking the business and impersonal edge out. I have heard members say that we should run the school in a more businesslike fashion, especially when, from their vantage point as single proprietary entrepreneurs, they see some decisions taking too much effort. We should develop policies for grievances, problem solving and mediation through the interactive process; involving a cross section of the members of the community. Then we need to revisit our procedures from time-to-time for the new members of the community. It is so easy to assume that everyone knows. However, unless we verify and check, we may be fooling ourselves. Hence, we need some system to guarantee that new members understand and embrace the core values.

In looking at developing fairness within a community we cannot leave out leadership. There are many leaders within the school group: administrator, board chair, chairs for committees, president of the parent association, teachers and facilitators of meetings, not to mention all the people who rise to the surface when a task needs to get done. One major role of the leadership in the school community is that it be the carrier of the vision; the one who brings it to the forefront and calls the community's attention to the purpose of the school. The leader should be visible while also remaining invisible. "The essential leadership task in any community is to empower more and more people to share in getting the job done, to feel responsible for getting it done, to cooperate getting it done and to find ways of using every single member's talents in getting it done. Empowerment is the essential leadership task."[28]

Management is about human behavior; it is people in association with one another. The leader aims to make himself redundant in order to become part of the team, much the way a teacher functions in the classroom. How can I help you help yourself?

Where possible, the position of leader, chair or facilitator can be shared. In any meeting, be it a staff meeting, parent association meeting or committee meeting, the facilitator can be rotated each week. This is a format that we have used for some meetings and we have found it to be successful. This cultivates, too, a spirit of expectation that there is something for everyone. Be sure, in facilitating, that those being quiet are recognized. Establish methods for bringing the reticent member of your group into the light. They could be the facilitator, secretary, time keeper or in charge of the agenda.

Susan Campbell, who researched how groups build community, observed in some communities that the members ended the meeting with a self-reflection and asked questions that helped them to evaluate their work. This certainly helped to build cohesion and a sense of accomplishment, and it kept them on the task.

Responsibility

To be responsible denotes being liable to be called upon to answer; to be answerable for or morally answerable or trustworthy. Responsibility in a community is not to be taken lightly. It is connected to one's integrity. Responsibility in a school community requires involvement. It implies that one should not be waiting to be asked; everyone has a role in the mission of the school. One need only look and there will be something that calls our attention to the need for our expertise. Responsibility is honored.

In my adolescent program two of our four rules are: 1) take responsibility for yourself, your actions and the consequences of your actions, and; 2) take responsibility for the environment (the community). It seems to me that these are appropriate concepts for the school and for the larger Montessori community too.

Teachers should be aware of their obligations as teachers. They should take every opportunity to participate in international, national and regional conferences that will enlighten and reunite them with the original reasons they were drawn into Montessori education. They should be prepared for their work within the classroom. They should know that their work also exists outside the class with conference times, parent meetings and staff meetings. The teachers are the integral piece in giving life to the school as an organism and should be a part of the interactive process that helps define the school community.

Administrators should realize that mobilizing commitment and action is a collaborative participatory process, and they should seek information that will help develop their skills at achieving such. Leaders carry the torch of the school's visions. They engage people within the objective and gain commitment. Leadership and school development are dynamic developmental processes that rest upon the core values of the school. School leaders should observe how teachers in the Montessori classroom lead, and model their leadership after their observations. The leaders should realize that the primary focus of their work is pedagogical.

The board of directors carries the responsibility for the fiscal health of the school and must agree that the arena of pedagogy belongs to the senate of teachers and support staff. Its fiscal decisions should reflect educational priorities consistent with the schools' mission and philosophy. It should engage in responsible budgeting that delineates budgetary support for adequate and necessary classroom supplies and the full complement of tools and materials essential to conducting a Montessori class. Any encumbrances should be to enhance the functioning of the school but not to take away from the purpose of the school community.

The parent body has responsibilities too. They agree by their membership to be involved in the functions of the school; attending meetings, organizing celebrations of appreciation, contributing energy, time and wealth within reasonable parameters. Parents know that the success of their child is reflected in their involvement in the child's life. This doesn't mean being in the classroom looking over the teacher's shoulder but, rather, taking care of the obstacles that thwart the school from being the most effective environment it can be for their child's development.

There is a collective responsibility that can be developed through the interactive process of people engaging one another in a climate of support and encouragement. When developing policies and procedures, bylaws and which goals and objectives need to be addressed, a team of representatives from each of the bodies of members will pave the road for a cohesive and dynamic program that reflects the healthy school community.

Equal Opportunity

Members need to perceive and to have the opportunity to serve and communicate. When power is shared with people in the decision making process, using the skills and talents of people at various levels of commitment, responsibility to the organization grows. People feel respected and honored. This does not mean that the school leaves itself open to the vagaries and whims of whoever steps forward. When people are put together for a purpose there is no guarantee that they won't be concerned with their own welfare and agenda. Hence, as mentioned, it is imperative that the school's mission and philosophy be the light which guides the workings of any collaborative group.

The school community needs to establish that each child in the classroom, each teacher, each parent, each employee and each board and committee member has equal access to resources at the level where they work. "As schools grow, they risk becoming fragmented. The necessary differentiation of tasks can too often create divisions. We begin to separate ourselves into factions, each directed by its own agenda. Each part begins to compete for attention, resources, power. There is a climate of 'us versus them': primary versus elementary, faculty versus administration, parents versus staff, board versus head. And so deviations occur and the school begins to lose touch with its own purpose."[29]

Being aware that this is a possibility for our schools, it is clear that we must look at our systems of communication, the organization of the school, and the work of the members of the community. We must put together a team of individuals who would want to address this fragmentation.

Balance and Harmony

When I was exploring with some parents the prospect of starting an adolescent program, we had the opportunity to meet with Larry Schaefer of

Lake Country School (Minneapolis, Minnesota). In our conversations, Mr. Schaefer used a term which has become a point of light in my dealings with adolescents, parents and staff. He mentioned treating one another with a sense of "human heartedness." To me this rings a chord of seeing the world and all its people as worthy of respect. This should be at the heart of how we look at and treat one another in our schools; with that sense of love. It inspires patience, calls to the higher voice in us that rises above the dust of action, and reminds us of our more noble side. It teaches us to thrive in diversity; to understand and appreciate cultural differences and shared human values of peace, freedom, responsibility, human dignity, and the celebration of life.

The balance and harmony of our community heralds us to be attentive to the equation of value and action. Like rowing a boat with one oar, all action without the accompanying values, or all value without action, will only get us spinning in circles. The balance is the dialogue between the two. Further, it is so easy to tip the scales in the direction of selfishness, greed, power, and status, that it behooves us to keep the sense of human heartedness in the close reaches of our reason and emotion. Better the balance errs to that greater sense of who we are.

Maria Montessori extols the nature of love and encourages us to try to comprehend it. She remarks that, "If we want to produce harmony in the world, it is clear that we ought to think more about this. We should study its implications."[30] With the child as the focus of our work we touch on this love. "The child is the only point on which there converges from everyone a feeling of gentleness and love. People's souls soften and sweeten when one speaks of children; the whole of mankind shares in the deep emotion which they awaken. The child is the wellspring of love. ...Love that we feel for the child, must exist potentially between man and man, because human unity does exist and there is no unity without love."[31]

Communication

"We communicate much less well than we think we do!"[32]

With just a small amount of time and reflection, we can see the etymological connection between community and communication. To communicate is to impart, to bestow, to reveal, to have mutual access to, to partake in. Without communication there is no community; it sustains the momentum of the community. The ultimate building of community is to avail oneself of communication. For the health of our schools it is important to have formal and informal communication networks that support one another. Communication is the responsibility of all the members; between staff and parents, heads and staff, board and parent body, and on. Good communication fosters awareness, motivation, participation, innovation, problem-solving, and an ability to mobilize.

Guidelines for communication need to be in place, structures that clarify for us to whom we need to go when we have something to report or when we have a wish to make known. Do we disseminate information freely or do we withhold information? Communication has two edges: one that builds healthy groups and relationships and the other that tears down connections. Parking lot conversation, rumor, innuendo and lack of communication networks are the creatures of destruction and derision. We need to apply the dictates of balance and harmony to our communication process, use our noble sense of human heartedness and developed sense of reason when living in community.

Schools, too, need to stay in contact with one another by phone, letter, at conferences. No two schools will look the same because their experience and knowledge routes will be different, but the collaborative processes will sharpen our commitment and vision, assist us with roads taken that prove successful in achieving our purpose.

Workshops on communication and affirmation, and diversity training are available everywhere today. Mediation and conflict resolution groups and offices are in every major city and most towns. Contacting them and asking for assistance in setting up workshops for the school members is only a matter of picking up the phone. Surely schools need to put in place procedures to make sure people are heard and feel listened to. The same structures that we use in our classrooms can be a guideline for our school as a community. Again, the child is our teacher, the child points the way.

Conclusion

In today's world it is clear that people want to be a part of a community, want to feel connected to something larger than themselves. They want the opportunity to give and receive, to teach and learn, to help and be helped. We must re-vision our schools to be communities, where people are supported in expressing these deeper aspects of themselves. Being a part of a healthy community gives people a chance to develop their abilities; enabling them to overcome ego-centeredness by joining with others in a common task; and it is noble work to work for the child.

Working within a Montessori school is reward enough in itself, knowing that children are being given the opportunity to reveal their true selves in the prepared environment. Working in a healthy school community that has a clear vision and philosophy intricately linked to the development of the child as observed by Dr. Montessori is an added reward. Working in the midst of people who share the vision, the core values, and hope for the future, who put their faith in the unfolding of the child is a peak experience. ❖

Tom Lepoutre-Postlewaite is currently a teacher at Santa Cruz Montessori School in California. He trained in Bergamo, Italy, has taught lower and upper elementary and currently directs a program for 12-15 year olds. Tom was a pilot member and organizer of Children's Creative Response to Conflict in Santa Cruz.

Education, Ethics and the Family

Mona Grieser

One of the most famous floods in American history was the Johnstown flood in Pennsylvania in 1889 in which over 2000 people died. One of the survivors bored people most of his life by telling them exactly how he survived that flood. When he died and was met at the Pearly Gates by St. Peter, he was asked if he had any requests and he said, "Yes." He wanted to tell people about how he had survived the great flood of 1889. Peter shrugged but said it could be arranged. A short time later some 10,000 souls gathered to hear the old man tell his story. Just before he started, however, St. Peter leaned over to him and said, "By the way, I should tell you that Noah is in the audience."

I feel a little like the old man must have felt when he heard that Noah was in the audience. I was asked to speak about spirituality, ethics and the family to a group of educators who are on the front line, every day dealing with the values of children and their parents. I ask you to give me some allowances then, and perhaps I can approach the topic from a different perspective; one in which I have a great deal more experience.

My field is education and communication in international development. If you have ever seen an advertisement for drinking and driving, or the "Just Say No" campaigns in the U.S., that is the kind of work I do internationally. I am in the business of behavior change. My work is typically funded by the foreign aid programs of the United States or the multilateral donor agencies like the World Bank or UNDP. Most of my work is aimed at improving the quality of people's lives, whether through improving their health, their environment or their social condition. I have been doing this for over 25 years and I can tell you that, in its own way, it is quite an industry.

Interestingly, the tools and technologies we need to improve people's lives are actually well known and have been for some years. As long ago as the 1960's, studies indicated that investments in girls' education were more cost-effective, contributed more to GDP, and improved overall prosperity in a country more than building roads or health centers, or than providing modern homes and piped water to everyone.

This year I participated in the first global conference on girls' education. For years we have had the technology to feed the world's hungry, house the world's homeless. That we haven't done it we have put down to lack of political will. I have since come to the conclusion that that is a cop-out. What it comes down to is an inability to personalize the pain and needs of others and our lack of shame at not doing so. As a consequence, families all over the world are in a state of transition in response to external stresses and it might be useful to take a look at some of the changes and why they are happening. As I talk about them, I am not going to focus on the values, but I want you to look at the values behind the statistics I feed you.

There are five major global trends in family formation, structure and function that we can talk about based on the research record of the last two decades, and each of them has wide implications:

- women's average age at first marriage and childbirth is going up, delaying the formation of new families;
- families and households have gotten smaller;
- the burden on working-age parents of supporting younger and older dependents has increased;
- the proportion of female-headed households has increased;
- women's formal participation in the labor market has increased at the same time as men's has declined, shifting the balance of economic responsibilities in the family.

Both men and women are postponing marriage, women primarily because they are staying longer in school. In the United States, the average age at marriage for men is now 36, the highest it has ever been and has more to do with convenience than economics. In the same way that the women's movement has freed women from becoming financially dependent on men, it has also encouraged men to become more socially independent on women. They no longer need cooks and cleaners, and sex – they can still get it.

Obviously, increasing the age at marriage means that women also tend to delay first childbirth, but there is still a large proportion of adolescent women giving birth, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, where 50% of all women below the age of 20 have already had their first child. In the Middle East and sub-Saharan Africa the average family size is still seven to eight children per family, and large sizes continue to be the norm. But marriage as an institution is also taking a beating. In 1990 in Japan 1% of births were outside marriage but in Africa more than 40% of births were to unmarried women, and in Scandinavia up to 55% of all births were to unmarried women.

In Africa, culture plays a role in the unmarried pregnancy rate. Many researchers assume that Africans are more promiscuous or that their social and cultural mores permit fooling around. In fact, it's the changing world that Africans are living in that is bringing them trouble. It used to be that the fact of having children meant the survival of a tribe or a clan or a family. A barren woman was no use to the survival of society, so it was considered acceptable for a woman to prove that she was capable of having children before a man committed himself to the relationship. Neither she nor the man was scorned. Today the need has changed but the behavior has not, because the outdated values that led up to that behavior have never been publicly discussed. We will talk about that later.

Average household size is decreasing by at least ten percent in most countries and is declining further in others. Beyond the natural ebb and flow of household size there is some evidence to show that families in general are becoming more dispersed. Young and adult elderly, spouses and other relatives who might have been living in the same household are now living apart.

In less developed regions the forces driving families apart are labor migration and refugee movements caused by war, disease, famine, environmental degradation or political unrest. The estimated number of refugees in the world was over 18 million in 1992, up from 2 million in 1972. This does not include another 25 million internally displaced. This means that globally one in 120 people is a refugee. In Africa it is one in four, most of them women and children.

Employment opportunities also contribute to the changes in family size and composition. In southern Africa, the pull of job opportunities in the larger cities of South Africa has left countries like Botswana with a majority of female-headed households and, indeed, a majority of females. In Cambodia, a devastating 30 years of war also left it with a significant majority of females in the larger population. And, in case you are thanking God you live in the United States and it doesn't concern you, the data for our inner cities shows the same proportionality and the same forces, only instead of war we have crime and joblessness. In fact, the rise in women-headed households is so large now that one out of every three households has a woman as the sole breadwinner.

U.S. Census Bureau data states that if the husband is unemployed, the likelihood of a two parent family breaking up increases. If neither the husband or wife works, the marriage is likely to break up within two years. The likelihood of a divorce increases when both parents work full-time, and poverty increases the volatility of marriage twice as much. We know that single women-headed households are more likely to be in poverty, since it takes more than just one paycheck to keep families going. In fact, in the U.S., our booming economy notwithstanding, the gap between rich and poor has grown larger and larger, and median family income has declined even more.

Maintaining the ties amongst family members is often difficult and can mean the difference between subsistence and destitution. With fewer aunts and uncles to tend to children, and fewer children to support aging parents, dependent family members may get less attention and adequate care. This is matched by the rising costs of dependency, whether it is supporting elderly parents or raising children. Under these conditions the sustaining support of both parents becomes critical. Increased life expectancy in most countries means that the period working age adults must support the dependent elderly gets longer and longer. It is now estimated that women spend up to 17 years of their lives caring for children and 18 years caring for elderly parents.

We have talked a lot about women. What do we know about fathers? Very little, to tell you the truth. While the last decades have seen a major rise in data on women and their various roles, and while it has become acceptable for women to move into various roles from the family to the career, the role of men as fathers is only recently being empirically investigated. We know that the father role is recognized in all societies. We know that the father role is a powerful one. Fathers in most societies are invested with power (in theory at least) to provide their families with economic support, serve as moral role models (especially to sons), protect their families from harm and wield authority over other household members. We also know that fathers are capable of nurturing their children even though fathers, in almost every society devote less time to direct child care than mothers. They contribute about one third of the time mothers spend on child care, although they play a major decision-making role in the welfare of the children. Decisions on family planning, education, and health are often made by fathers, not mothers. The sole authority role of the father may diminish with the educational level of the mother or if she is an income earner. Often the nurturing role of the father is quietly undermined by mothers, who may pay lip service to equality but pull rank when an important decision like discipline has to be made. Children are a traditional source of women's identity and they do not give it up easily.

We do know that the role of fathers in families is an important and direct one. In African-American families, which have been much studied, we know that the presence of a biological father has been shown to have a positive effect on the cognitive development of children, especially boys, and is associated with children having fewer behavioral problems, more sense of their ability to do things and improved self-esteem. The availability of a father's income is associated with improved social outcomes. The proportion of a father's income, not just the total amount, is positively correlated with children's welfare. We can see this in the data that comes from Guatemala where children's nutritional status was affected by a father's income, suggesting that fathers who contribute a larger proportion of their income to the household may have a greater commitment to the family.

Fathers may be deliberately discouraged from participation in family issues. Literature on child rearing, birth control and education have often been written exclusively for the mother. Hospital waiting rooms, prenatal clinics and other such settings, if not actively discouraging fathers, do nothing to welcome them, yet studies show that those fathers who were actively engaged in the birth of their children are more likely to be involved in child care afterwards. There is increasing evidence that fathers who are actively involved in their families themselves receive a bonus: improved self-esteem and confidence and improved social behaviors. We know that there are very few policies that promote father involvement directly in their families other than financial support.

We know that fathers' involvement with children is related to their involvement with the mother and with family living arrangements. Some men see parenting and marriage as a package. In Jamaica, fathers' relationships become severely curtailed when children live apart from them, particularly if another male is in the household. There seems to be an implicit attitude on the part of men to respect each other's rights over women, even at the expense of father-child bonds. In Kenya, a man who leaves his village and family behind to seek better employment in urban areas will often take for himself a second family, and thus deprive the first of the benefits of his salary and presence.

We know that marriage is fragile. For most people it falls far short of a lifelong partnership under one roof. We know that multiple marriages, either simultaneous or sequential, are common and can create a complex web of sibling relationships for children and an uncertain claim on parents' attention and income. We know that men have more children than women by virtue of their multiple partnering arrangements whether within or outside a marriage. We also know that economic conditions have changed for men to the point where in some countries they are beginning to be the disadvantaged group, with higher rates of school dropout, increasing numbers of them in the unemployed ranks, and increasing acting out of the multiple stresses they face, through family violence, crime, or war.

All this means that children are increasingly at risk. The concept of childhood as a protected and secure period of life, is far removed from the reality. Policy makers typically assume that conventional family forms automatically confer advantages on children. They also assume that children generally reside with their biological parents and siblings, and therefore have prior claim on family resources. These may be appealing assumptions but they are not necessarily factual. We have already discussed the birth circumstances of being born out of wedlock to living in a single parent household which can predispose the child to living in poverty. The decisions that parents and other adults make over their sexual unions also affect children, as do wars, migration and educational attainment of their parents.

Children born to adolescent mothers out of wedlock, who have incomplete education, are probably the most vulnerable human beings. We know that family policy issues are increasingly being articulated and are focused on the rights of individual members of the family. This is supported by research which shows that welfare is indeed individual in the sense that even within families siblings may have very different levels of nutrition, education, social mobility and well being. I recall a UNICEF photograph of twins brought to a health clinic in India. The boy was a bouncing healthy, even overfed, child. The girl twin was suffering from severe malnutrition and neglect.

We don't know what keeps families together despite difficult economic circumstances because many do survive tribulation. We study problems and deal with symptoms. We understand a great deal about poverty and can describe it in detail, but we know very little about the path to prosperity. We study pathology not health. We are problem-focused, not vision-focused.

So where in all this family research overload does spirituality play a part? Let me use a story to illustrate my point.

I grew up in East Africa, still one of the most beautiful places on earth. Kenya was a British protectorate and colony, and those of you who saw the film *Out of Africa* will appreciate that they ran the country as their personal playground pretty much until independence. Many Englishmen were enthusiastic fishermen and while the Ngong hills had trout, Lake Victoria, the largest inland lake in the world, had rift valley cichlids and a few other fish generally uninteresting to sports fishermen. This story is about how Lake Victoria went from being one of the most ecologically bio-diverse habitats on the planet to arguably the single most devastating social and environmental problems on the planet.

These fishermen concocted a plan to import and breed a more challenging fish, and against government orders brought in the Nile perch, known in other parts of Africa as capitaine. Nile perch grow to about seven feet in length. They have a voracious appetite, and can survive in deep water unlike the cichlid population which generally inhabit the shallow and mid water range. They thrived. The crocodiles at the edge of the water couldn't get at them, and the medium sized-fish that had previously occupied the habitat didn't stand a chance. They were quickly eliminated. Within one generation almost all the mid-size and smaller fish had been consumed by the perch and their population was growing. They had no known predators and simply multiplied unchecked.

The African communities that lived around the lake had depended on the fish catch for their food and for their income. The men would take their dugouts and nets, haul in as many fish as they could get in one morning and bring them back to their wives to smoke and sell on the local market or to put on the table. They couldn't catch the Nile perch with their traditional methods. It broke the nets it was so big, and if you caught too many, you risked overturning the boats. Their wives didn't know what to do with the fish either. It took too long to smoke, dry and be preserved and would go bad, long before the whole fish had properly been smoked. Not only that, it required so much fuel to keep the fires burning that they and their children spent long hours cutting wood and generally deforesting the area.

The cost of fish went up and fishermen stopped feeding their own children fish in order to get as much as they could on the market. For the first time, protein calorie malnutrition became a feature of the communities. From a community that had been self sufficient, they became at first a community that imported basic commodities. These were trucked in by truckers who drove the long distances from Kampala and Nairobi, over lousy roads to bring flour, oil and powdered imported milk to replace the natural fish protein. With no real cash economy, the community had difficulty paying for these basic goods, so they had to prioritize and stop paying for other things, like education for their daughters. Many men moved to urban areas in an effort to find employment. Often they took second wives and forgot their families at home. Political strife and outright war kept those in the capital busy, and so they were unconcerned with the acute suffering of the lake communities.

Eventually an international investor tried his hand at building a canning factory for the Nile perch, but unlike tuna, their flesh changed flavor under canning and no real market developed for it. In fact, over time the perch itself turned to cannibalizing its own young because it no longer had a sufficient source of food. The cichlids that had fed on vegetable matter in the warm surface waters were insufficient in number to keep up with the algae that overtook the lake and the oxygen levels in the water dropped. But in the initial excitement to build roads and infrastructure to accommodate the factories and industry that people thought would make them all rich, government borrowed money from international lenders. National debt blossomed.

And so the truckers came, and to while away the long evenings away from their families, they would have sex with local girls … and that was how AIDS came to spread in Uganda and then crossed the continent. As you know, no one knows how it started, but we know exactly how it spreads. Today one in four children in Uganda is born HIV positive.

I could make this story short, but I won't, because it's a modern morality tale. Today, along the southernmost part of Lake Victoria, less than 23% of the population between the ages of 23 and 53 is still alive. The rest have died of AIDS. Walk into any lake village. You will see a few old men, more old women and a few children and teenagers. Grandmothers are raising the young and having a hard time. It's women's work to grow the crops that put the food on the table in these societies. But there are not enough healthy younger women for this work and most of the men have died.

Younger adolescent males, desperately trying to come up with a concept of masculinity for themselves in this devastated society, with no positive model of where to place their enormous energy, gravitate to the armies of powerful men who promise them pride and food and weapons in exchange for their loyalty. And so we continue to have political instability. And as armies move they carry with them the disease and take it home to their loved ones. In Zambia 64% of the army is HIV positive. It's similar in Uganda.

Now the international environmental community is seriously looking at bombing the entire lake to get rid of the perch and then restock it with cichlids from other Rift Valley lakes. Restocking the human population will take time, peace, dedication and political will.

There are some wonderful people who have dedicated their lives to working in Uganda, to bringing health programs, nutrition programs, environmental programs, economic and enterprise development programs. I don't know if this area will ever recover, but I am concerned that we learn from these tragedies. I drew two lessons from the Uganda experience. The first is that our world is so interconnected that it makes no sense to address one portion of it without addressing the system as a whole. Those of you who are familiar with chaos theory will understand the butterfly analogy. That when a butterfly flaps its wings in Mongolia, the weather changes over California. That's a crude way of saying that all phenomena, human and physical, are intimately related and until we understand the relationships as well as the structure, we will have a great deal of difficulty adapting ourselves to the very complex systems we have chosen to inhabit.

I started out by saying that my experience has led me to conclude that the concept of political will is a cop-out. It allows people to devolve individual responsibility to the group and then blame the group for inaction. Much of that comes from our understanding that values and ethics are intrinsically personal.

The second problem is that commonly held values and concepts of morality have come to be so broadly defined in our society that only egregious examples of sexual misbehavior or outright corruption elicit any outrage from us. Washington is particularly bedeviled with fluctuating morality. Senators and congressmen routinely 'misspeak'; they don't lie. Sexual misconduct is only awful if you're caught at it, and even then its only bad if you try to lie about it. Passing laws that favor big business over the larger population is not considered immoral; the end justifies the means.

We are not alone. In India, the Indian government needed development assistance money for some of its programs, but the World Bank had put a conditionality on its loans leading up to the United Nations' Conference on the Environment in 1990. The conditionality was that governments had to prove they were taking care of their environmental issues. India was the only country at that conference that could show through GIS data (that's satellite data) that the amount of forest cover in the last few years had increased by 17%. All the other countries were bemoaning the worsening state of their forests and, while people were astounded at this claim of India's, who could argue with satellite photography? The World Bank gave India its lowest interest loan as a reward.

The following year, the bank did its own satellite photography and to its consternation found that India's forest cover had receded by more than 23%. It turns out that India had deliberately taken its photographs during the month preceding the sugar cane harvest, when the tall canes would register as tall enough to be trees. For India, who needed the loans to service its social programs, it was business as usual. For the World Bank it was corruption.

The word "religion" has similar squeamish overtones for many people. Those of you who read the *Utne Reader* magazine, may note that it's latest issue talks about "Designer God: Creating Your Own Religion." As we move closer to the millennium, more and more people are examining their relationship to religion, the relationship of science and religion, and trying to bring some order to their complex lives. But when I speak of religion, I am speaking primarily of the world's great faiths.

Recently I was part of a group brought together by the World Bank to look at *Spiritual Indicators of Development*. The bank was concerned that over fifty years of development assistance had not significantly improved the situation of the world's poor. Absolute poverty had increased, and the gap between rich and poor all over the world was increasing. When the bank conducted its social assessments to see what people felt and knew about their situation, they were encountering hopelessness and fatalism that they found unexpected and did not know how to deal with. Even with social safety nets in place, people were often unable to use them to better their lot. The bank decided this was a realm that economics had not prepared them for and turned to the major world religions for guidance. Each religion was tasked with writing a paper for the bank on *Spiritual Indicators for Development*. This was an important starting point because it forced the religious agencies to articulate the vision they have for human development and then assess how far along we were towards achieving that vision, and how the work of the development agencies blocked, negated or fostered the vision.

Everyone needs a vision, either personal or public. Harry Emerson Fosdick, a clergyman from New York City, said that as a child he would play in the woods and a favorite game involved crossing a log over a stream. If he looked down at where he was putting his feet, or into the fast moving water, more often than not he would fall in. But if he picked a tree on the opposite bank that was in line with the log, and kept his head up to look at it, he could walk across without mishap. That's a vision. The vision of the World Bank and most of the institutions of our century, given the separation of church and state, has been very limited, looking only at material progress. Consequently, we tend to operate on the *Paint Your Wagon* model. You don't know it? I'm surprised … most of us use it daily. The theme song to *Paint Your Wagon* starts, "Where am I going? I don't know. When will I get there? I ain't certain. All that I know is I am on my way."

That's not the way spirituality is supposed to function. All religions accept the existence of a presence and a power superior to man. Religious doctrines believe that from that power emanates fundamental principles and practices which are designed to benefit mankind and to which humankind is held accountable. They also believe that it is an inherent aspect and purpose of human existence to seek to consciously recognize its connectivity with that presence through both worship and behavior. There is an underlying thread of unity connecting the world's great religious traditions. They each propound basic ethical truths and standards of behavior that constitute the very basis of social cohesion and collective purpose.

There is no such thing as political will in my estimation. There are only individuals who have abandoned basic ethical truths and put expediency and self-interest, in its many forms, in its place. I gave a talk at the World Bank recently and, after they had posed their questions, I asked them "If you were promised that your job would not be on the line, that your career advancement would proceed as intended, that your boss would never know your decisions and you were asked instead to decide matters based on your conscience, how many of your daily decisions would you make in the same way you have been making them?" They looked downright uncomfortable.

I should say up front that I am a member of the Baha'i Faith, and because the faith believes that the fundamental principals of all religions are the same, (e.g. justice, honesty, assistance to others, responsibility to the community, obedience to the law, and worship), it believes that friendly association between all religions is possible. Religious principals express themselves within humans in the form of internal values which, in turn, frame the principles by which we live and act. However, values can serve many functions. They can anchor us in the past or provide a compass for the future. I happen to believe the latter is the spirit of the age. The most intractable controversies occur when old ethnic, racial and religious disagreements collide with new system issues. The positive expression of these fundamental values when directly applied to determining how to better the human condition is what various religious groups refer to as the establishment of the "Kingdom of God on earth."

One of the great self-help writers of our time is F. Scott Peck, who spent a great deal of time encouraging Americans to explore their inner selves. He has now come to the conclusion that the last frontier for humankind is what he calls "group space" working hand in hand with "inner space." He says, "Unless we can quite rapidly learn how to better live and work together, there is every reason to suppose that humanity will go down the tubes despite all of its sophistication." Despite the admonition of thinkers throughout the ages to *know thyself*, all but a tiny percentage of the world's population remains terribly self-ignorant. Nothing contributes more to the dysfunctionality of our society than our lack of insight into ourselves.

One major contribution that teachers can bring to children is the ability to be self-critical. In my own faith we are asked to bring ourselves to account each night, to measure ourselves against a standard and see how we can improve ourselves. It's wonderfully humbling, I can assure you, and overcoming personal flaws and weaknesses, achieving self-discipline is a wonderful way to self-esteem. In India a man or woman may renounce his life as he gets older and become a Sadhu, looking for enlightenment and dependent on the charity of others who acknowledge his spiritual journey and help him along by feeding and housing him. In this country, a Sadhu would probably end up in jail as a vagrant or be counted amongst the many homeless mentally ill. Rarely do we expect our spiritual search to be a discomforting one.

The larger problem has to do with learning to live with others. As our world shrinks, as travel and immigration force us to recognize that we have multiple values that are often at conflict, there are few arenas in which we can carve out group values that we can all live with. The recent hammering out of the Human Rights Bill that was signed by most of the countries of the world was just such an effort. A charter on the rights of children was also signed by most countries, the U.S. excepted. The Charter on the Environment was signed by most countries, the U.S. excepted until three years later. The Treaty on Global Warming is signed by most countries, the U.S. excepted. The Beijing Platform for Action on Women was signed by most countries, the U.S. excepted. The creation of the International Court was ratified by most countries, the U.S. excepted. Signing these bills does not mean that all countries will promote and enforce the contents. That will take demand and vigilance on the part of the citizenry.

A friend of mine in development was very impressed as a young man with the simple philosophy and profound thought expressed in the proverb, ascribed to the Chinese, "Give a farmer a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach him to fish and you feed him for a lifetime." Today, however, twenty years later he looks at the expression with a more jaundiced eye. Implied in the proverb is the image of this poor man sitting on the bank of a river without the knowledge of how to fish. Today we credit farmers with substantial knowledge about their own environment but caught in changed circumstances that they may have neither the power or authority to deal with.

If the man sitting on the bank is not fishing, it is probably because the water has become polluted from upstream factories – factories that were constructed with economic incentives and policies that never took the farmer and his needs into account. It's more likely he's not fishing because he lacks the credit to purchase a boat and fishing equipment. If he's thinking about fishing at all it's because the crops he grows have little or no economic value on the global market and it's fish or starve. And the final fantasy is assuming that the farmer is a man. Eighty percent of the world's food crops are grown by women, so it's much more likely that our farmer is female and illiterate.

From this foundation shines forth the radiance of spirituality, which is unity, the love of God, the knowledge of God, praiseworthy morals and the virtues of the human world. ❖

Mona Grieser is the owner and president of Global Vision Inc. She has twenty years experience in development: specifically in communications, environmental education and training, and women's issues. She holds a B.A. in fine arts/illustration from Mills College, and two master's degrees: one in mass communication from the University of Minnesota and another in international public health from the University of California. Ms. Grieser has lectured at Yale and Princeton Universities and has published numerous papers.